AN

ANSWER

TO THE

Dissenters Pleas

FOR

SEPARATION,

OR AN

ABRIDGMENT

OF THE

LONDON CASES;

WHEREIN

The Substance of those Books is digested into one Short and Plain Discourse.

Th. Bennet

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

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THE PREFACE.

THAT Collection *of* Caſes *and other* Diſcourſes, *which was lately written by the moſt Eminent of the* Conforming *Clergy, to recover* Diſſenters *to the Communion of the* Church *of* England, *has met with ſuch an Univerſal Approbation, that I need not ſpeak any thing in commendation of it. Therefore I ſhall wave all diſcourſe of that nature, and only give a ſhort account of this* Abridgment.

The Collection *it ſelf being large and dear, it was thought convenient to reduce it to a leſs Bulk and ſmaller Price; that thoſe Perſons who have not either Money to buy, or Time to peruſe ſo big a Volume, may reap the benefit of it upon eaſier terms. This, I preſume, will juſtify my Deſign, if I have not fail'd in the proſecution of it.*

I have us'd my beſt endeavours to avoid obſcurity, and all thoſe other faults which are often charg'd upon Abridgments; and I hope I may venture to ſay, I have omitted nothing that is material; tho' the Number of theſe ſheets is not the Sixth part of thoſe that contain the Original. *For the Learned Authours of the* Collection *do frequently glance, and ſometimes Diſcourſe largely, upon the ſame Subject: ſo that by avoiding Repetitions and blending all the Subſtance together, I have much leſſen'd the Expence of Money and Time. This and ſome other advantages ariſe from the Digeſtion into Chapters; which cou'd not have been gain'd, if I had made a diſtinct Abridgment of every ſingle Diſcourſe.*

I hope, I have fairly Repreſented the Senſe of my Authours; but if I have miſtaken or injur'd it in any particular, I am ſorry for it, and do heartily beg Pardon of Them and the Reader.

The 11th *and* 12th *Chapters, I am ſure, are exact; for they have receiv'd the* A. Bp. *of* York's *own Corrections, for which I am obliged to return his* Grace *my humbleſt Thanks. Other parts I have ſubmitted to the Cenſure of other worthy Perſons, to whoſe Judgment I ſhall ever pay the greateſt Deference: but I have reaſon to ſuſpect my ſelf for what I have receiv'd no Aſſiſtance*

in;

in; and therefore I desire the Reader to Correct me, when he finds occasion.

I have follow'd not only my own Opinion, but the Directions of several very judicious Persons, in the omission of A. Bishop Tillotson's *Discourse of* Frequent Communion; *which is wholly foreign to the Design of the* Collection.

The Quotations in the London *Edit.* 1698. *which I follow, are very badly Printed; and therefore, if any mistakes of that Nature have crept into this Book, I hope they will not be charg'd upon me. Many of them appear'd false at first View; and many I knew not what to make of: but some of them I have ventur'd to Correct.*

God Almighty grant, that this weak endeavour may be of some Service at least towards the Cure of those Divisions, which have endanger'd the Ruin of the Best Church in the World.

St. John's *Coll. in* Cambridge,
Octob. 2d. 1699.

Tho. Bennet.

A Catalogue of thoſe Books, the Subſtance of which is contain'd in this Abridgment.

1. ARchbiſhop *Tenniſon's* Argument for Union, taken from the true Intereſt of thoſe *Diſſenters* in *England*, who profeſs and call themſelves *Proteſtants*.

2. Archbiſhop *Sharp*'s Diſcourſe concerning Conſcience. In two parts.

3. Biſhop *Grove*'s Perſuaſive to Communion with the Church of *England*.

4. Biſhop *Patrick*'s Diſcourſe of Profiting by Sermons.

5. Biſhop *Fowler*'s Reſolution of this Caſe of Conſcience, whether the Church of *England*'s Symbolizing, ſo far as it doth, with the Church of *Rome*, makes it unlawful to hold Communion with the Church of *England*.

6. *His* Defence of the Reſolution, &c.

7. Biſhop *Williams*'s Caſe of Lay-Communion with the Church of *England*.

8. *His* Caſe of Indifferent things uſed in the Worſhip of God.

9. *His* Vindication of the Caſe of Indifferent things, &c.

10. Dr. *Hooper*'s Church of *England* free from the Imputation of *Popery*.

11. Dr. *Sherlock*'s Reſolution of ſome Caſes of Conſcience, which reſpect Church-Communion.

12. *His* Letter to *Anonymus*, in Anſwer to his Three Letters to Dr. *Sherlock* about Church-Communion.

13. Dr. *Hicks*'s Caſe of Infant-Baptiſm.

14. Dr. *Freeman's* Caſe of Mixt-Communion.

15. Dr.

15. Dr. *Haſcard*'s Diſcourſe about Edification.
16. Dr. *Calamy*'s Diſcourſe about a Scrupulous Conſcience.
17. *His* Conſiderations about the Caſe of Scandal, or giving offence to Weak Brethren.
18. Dr. *Scott*'s Caſes of Conſcience reſolv'd, concerning the Lawfulneſs of joining with Forms of Prayer in Public Worſhip. In two parts.
19. Dr. *Claget*'s Anſwer to the *Diſſenters* Objections againſt the Common Prayers, &c.
20. Dr. *Resbury*'s Caſe of the Croſs in Baptiſm.
21. Dr. *Cave*'s Serious Exhortation, with ſome Important Advices relating to the late Caſes about Conformity.
22. Mr. *Evans*'s Caſe of Kneeling at the Holy Sacrament.

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THE

THE INTRODUCTION,

Containing An ARGUMENT for UNION,

Taken from the true Intereſt of thoſe Diſſenters *in* ENGLAND, *who Profeſs and call themſelves* PROTESTANTS.

THIS plain, that the ready way to overthrow a Church, is firſt to divide it; and that our Diſſentions are *Diviſions* properly ſo call'd. How mortal theſe breaches may at laſt prove, any man may eaſily foretell; and therefore 'tis the buſineſs of every good man to diſſuade from them. One way of doing this is to ſhew *Diſſenters* calmly and plainly, that their ends are not likely to be obtain'd; and that by the means they uſe, they will bring upon themſelves thoſe very evils, which they fear, and hope to remove.

This Argument I deſign to handle by way of Introduction to the following Diſcourſe; and in the Management of it I intend to ſhew, *Firſt* what thoſe ends are, which are propos'd by the Wiſer and better *Diſſenters*; and *Secondly*, that the

ends which they propoſe, can never be procur'd by the diſſettlement of the *Church* of *England*.

The *Diſſenters* ends are two; *Firſt*, the eſtabliſhing of themſelves, either as a National Church or as ſeveral diſtinct Churches; *Secondly* and chiefly, the farther advancement of the Reform'd Religion, by the removal of *Popery* and making the Proteſtant Religion more pure and perfect, than it is or can be under the preſent conſtitution of the *Church* of *England*.

Firſt then, as for the eſtabliſhing of themſelves as a National Church, 'tis impoſſible that *all of them* ſhou'd be United. For what Communion can the *Presbyterians* have with *Arians*, *Socinians*, *Anabaptiſts*, *Fifth-Monarchy-Men*, *Senſual Millenaries*, *Behmeniſts*, *Familiſts*, *Seekers*, *Antinomians*, *Ranters*, *Sabbatarians*, *Quakers*, *Muggletonians*, *Sweet-Singers*? Such a medly of Religions cannot frame amongſt them any common Scheme, in which their aſſents can be United.

Nor can any *Prevalent Party* hope to eſtabliſh themſelves as a National Church; becauſe they want *Epiſcopacy*, which hath obtain'd in *England* ſince it's firſt Converſion, and is ſo agreeable to the Scheme of the Monarchy, and will not eaſily be exchang'd for a newer model by the general conſent of the *Engliſh*, who are naturally tenacious of their ancient Cuſtoms. *Again*, all the Parties amongſt us have of late declar'd for mutual forbearance; and therefore they cannot be conſiſtent with themſelves, if they frame ſuch a National Conſtitution, by which any man who diſſents from it ſhall be otherwiſe dealt with, than by perſonal conference; which alſo he muſt have liberty not to admit, if he be perſuaded it is not fit or ſafe for him. Now ſuch a Body without

any

any other Nerves for its Strength and Motion; for the encouragement of thoſe who are Members of it, and the diſcouragement of thoſe who refuſe its Communion, will not long hold together; nor hath it means in it ſufficient for the ends to which it is deſign'd. And indeed by this means the Spiritual Power of Excommunication will be rendred of none effect. For what Puniſhment, what Shame, what Check will it be to croſs and perverſe men; if being ſhut out of the National Church, they may with open arms and with an applauſe due to real Converts, be receiv'd into this or the other particular Congregation, as it beſt ſuits with their good liking?

Some perſons Think, that ſince they gathered Churches out of Churches, there are not many true and proper *Presbyterians* in *England*; and if this be true, *Independency* is the prevalent ſide: but I know not how a National Church can be made up of ſeparate *Independent* Churches. For each *Independent* Congregation is a Church by its ſelf, and has beſides the general Covenant of Baptiſm, a particular Church-Covenant; and therefore 'tis difficult to imagine, how all of them can be United into one intire Society.

But be it ſuppos'd, that the *Presbyterians* are the moſt Numerous and prevalent Party; yet experience ſhews how hard a work it is for all of them to form themſelves into a Church of *England*. In the late times of public diſquiet, tho' they had great power and fair opportunities, and ſeem'd nigh the gaining of their point, yet they widely miſs'd of it. There were in the *Aſſembly of Divines*, ſome for an *Independent*, others for an

Eraſtian Intereſt. (*a*) There were a Party in the Nation, who were then call'd *Diſſenting Brethren*; who hated the *Directory*, and Printed a Remonſtrance againſt *Presbytery*, and reproach'd the *Presbyterians* in the ſame Phraſes, which they had us'd againſt the *Church-Liturgy*. (*b*) Some *Preſbyterians* did openly confeſs that their hopes were not anſwer'd, and that inſtead of a *Reformation* they had a *Deformation* in Religion.

Thoſe *Independents*, who adher'd to that part of the *Houſe* which joyn'd with the Army, prevail'd for a ſeaſon; but they alſo were diſturbed by the *Lilburniſts*, *Levellers*, *and Agitators*. (*c*) Then *Wynſtanly* publiſh'd the Principles of *Quakeriſm*, and *Enthuſiaſm* brake forth. *Joſeph Salmon* a Member of the Army publiſh'd his Blaſphemies and defended his Immoralities; and Printed a Book in which he ſet forth himſelf as the Chriſt of God. *Cromwel* favour'd *Enthuſiaſm*, and together with Six Souldiers Preach'd and Pray'd at *Whitehall*; and confeſs'd to a perſon of condition (from whom I receiv'd it, as did others yet living) that he Pray'd according to extraordinary impulſe; and that not feeling ſuch impulſe (which he call'd ſupernatural) he did forbear to Pray, oftentimes for ſeveral days together. At laſt he and his *Houſe of Commons* were publicly (*d*) diſturb'd by *Quakers*, beſpatter'd in their books, his Preachers interrupted by them in his own *Chappel*

(*a*) Vid. *Whitlock's* Memoirs, p. 116. & 189. Harm. Conſent. p. 20. (*b*) Teſtim. to the Truth of *J. C.* p. 31. (*c*) Myſt of Godlin. *Anno* 1649. *Wynſtanl.* in Sts. Paradiſe. c. 5. p. 54, &c. *Whitlock's* Memoirs, p. 430. *Salmon's* Rout. in Pref. & p. 10, 11, &c. Hiſt. of Indep. part 2. p. 153. View of the late Troubles. p. 366. (*d*) *Whitlock's* Memoirs, p. 592, 606, 624. *Burroughs's* Trumpet of the Lord. p. 2.

before

before his face; and himſelf conſpir'd againſt by thoſe who call'd themſelves *the free and well affected People of England*. Other Memorials might be produc'd relating to the hopeful Riſe, mighty progreſs and equal declenſion of the *Presbyterian* Party: but in ſhort, the longer the *Church* of *England* was diſſetled, the greater daily grew the Confuſion; ſo that thoſe very diſtractions prepar'd the Way for the Reſtitution of the King and the Church.

Now if *Diſſenters* cou'd not ſettle themſelves when they had ſuch fair opportunities, much leſs can they do it now; becauſe, *Firſt* the platform of *Diſcipline* ſo much applauded and contended for in the Reigns of Q. *Elizabeth* and K. *James*, has been partly tried, and loſt ſome of that Reverence which ſeveral had for it. *Secondly*, there is not now ſuch an Union amongſt *Diſſenters* as appear'd at the beginning of the late Troubles. *Thirdly*, thoſe who then favour'd the *Diſcipline*, do now incline to *Independency* and plead for *Toleration*. *Fourthly*, the ſincere Zeal and Power of many Pious Men of Quality, who favour'd the *Diſcipline* in the ſimplicity of their hearts, could not then ſettle it; much leſs will it now ſucceed, ſince theſe Men have ſeen ſuch Revolutions, and diſcover'd the Vile intereſts of many under pretence of *Pure Religion*. Theſe have ſeen their errour, and will not be a ſecond time engaged. *Laſtly*, by reaſon of the groſs Hypocriſies, numberleſs Parties and Opinions, Irreligious Books and Laxation of Diſcipline in thoſe Wars, *Atheiſm* has much increas'd; and they ſay that ſome undiſguiſed *Sceptics* and *Atheiſts* have, ſince the King's return, been much us'd in the Cauſe of our *Diſſenters*; and ſurely ſuch hands cannot do, what well meaning zeal could not effect.

Nor can they ſettle themſelves as ſeveral diſtinct Parties by a general Toleration. For *Firſt*, ſome *Diſſenters* believe ſome of the Parties to be incapable of forbearance, as maintaining Principles deſtructive of Chriſtian Faith and Piety. This Opinion they ſtill have of *Antinomians*, *Quakers and Muggletonians*; and they formerly declaim'd againſt the Toleration of *Eraſtians* and *Independents*. (*e*) Nay many Miniſters declar'd a *Toleration* to be *an appointing a City of Refuge in Mens Conſciences for the Devil to fly to---a Toleration of Soul-murther, the greateſt murther of all others*, &c. *Secondly*, there is no firmneſs in this Union; for the Union that laſteth, is that of the Concord of Members in an Uniform Body. *Thirdly*, Parties cannot be kept equal in number and intereſt, but one will always prevail and be favour'd as the Religion of the State. And it is natural for the ſtrongeſt to attempt to ſubdue all the reſt; ſo that they will not be at peace, but in perpetual diſcord.

Some indeed think, this inclination to the ſwallowing up of all other Parties is to be found almoſt only in the *Romiſh Church*: But there is ſomething of it to be diſcerned (I will not ſay in all *Churches*, for our own ſuffered *Bonner* himſelf to live, yet) in all *Factions* and *Parties*; tho' the inequality of Power makes it not ſeem to be alike in all of them. Parties, who are not (otherwiſe than in ſhew) concern'd for Religion, will perpetually covet after Power; and Parties that are conſcientious in their way, will do the ſame. For they withdraw from others, becauſe they think Communion with them to be unlawful; and if they

(*e*) *Harmon.* Conſent. p. 12.

think

think thoſe of another way (without Repentance) to be loſt eternally, Charity will urge them to reduce them; and they will think, that ſuffering them to wander declares them to be contented with their condition.

Beſides, experience ſhews that where there is Power there is little forbearance; and the ſame men, as their conditions alter, ſpeak of *Mercy* or *Juſtice*. Thus did the (*f*) *Donatiſts* of old, and the (*g*) *Heads* of the *Diſcipline* in the late Times. Thoſe that remov'd to *New England* for Liberty of Conſcience, when they had gotten footing there, refus'd Indulgence to *Anabaptiſts* and *Quakers*, and uſe them to this day with great ſeverity. The (*h*) *Commons* in 47 gave Indulgence to all, but thoſe that us'd the *Common Prayer*. The *Dutch* ſuffer none to ſpeak againſt thoſe Doctrines, which the State hath Authoriz'd; and the *Remonſtrant* Party contend for Superiority, whenever they have any encouragement. The *Popiſh Orders* mortally hate, and (were they not reſtrain'd) wou'd ſoon devour one another. And *Gittichius* his behaviour towards (*i*) *Ruarus* a *Socinian* of better temper, ſhews the ſpirit of the *Socinians*, thoſe great aſſerters of Liberty in Religion. The *Quakers* themſelves, when form'd into a ſociety, began to Excommunicate and Domineer; and *G. Fox* (*k*) declar'd, *he never lik'd the word* Liberty of Conſcience, *and wou'd have no Liberty given to* Preſbyterians, Papiſts, Independents *and* Baptiſts.

(*f*) Vid. *Auguſt.* Cont. Petil. Lib. 2. (*g*) *Mr. Calamy's* great dang. of Cov. Ref. p. 3. (*h*) *Whitlock's* Memoirs. p. 276. (*i*) *Ruari* Epiſt. par. 1. p. 415. 416. (*k*) Spirit of the Hart. p. 41.

I proceed now to the *Second* and Chief end of the *Diſſenters*, the removal of *Popery* and perfecting the *Proteſtant* Religion. As for the removal of *Popery*, 'tis plain that the ruin of our Church, called by *Diodati* the *Eye of the Reform'd Churches*, will rather advantage it both at home and abroad. For ſhe being more like the *Primitive* Pattern than ſome others of the Reformation, can better anſwer the *Papiſts* Objections, than thoſe that are cramp'd in a few points; and therefore if Diſſentions ruin her, *Popery* will the ſooner ſpread over *Foreign* Reform'd Countries. And ſince the *Romaniſts* are ſo powerful, diligent and cunning; have ſo much Learning and intereſt; and pretend to antiquity, miracles, *&c.* nothing can ſecure us from them *at home*, but the Chriſtian conſtitution and ſtrong nature of the Primitive, Learned, Pure, Loyal and Pious *Church* of *England*; which is a National Body already form'd, that is able to detect the Forgeries of *Rome*, and hath not given advantage to her by running from her into any extreme.

Monſieur *Daille*, who was not likely to be partial in this matter, and was at that time engaged in a Controverſy with one of our Divines, (*l*) ſays, *As to the* Church *of* England, *purg'd from Foreign wicked ſuperſtitious Worſhips and Errours, either impious or dangerous, by the rule of the Divine Scriptures, approv'd by ſo many and ſuch illuſtrious Martyrs, abounding with Piety towards God and Charity towards Men, and with moſt frequent examples of good works, flouriſhing with an increaſe of moſt Learned and wiſe Men from the beginning of the Reformation to this time; I have always had it in juſt eſteem, and till I die I ſhall continue in the ſame due veneration of it.*

(*l*) De Confeſſ. adv. *Hammond.* c. 1. p. 97, 98.

And

And indeed it is ſtrange, that any who know other Churches and States, ſhou'd be diſpleas'd at ours, which ſo much excels them. Now is it probable, that ſuch a Church ſhou'd have leſs ſtrength in it for the reſiſting of *Popery*, than a number of divided Parties, the beſt of which is not ſo Primitive, Learned, United, Numerous or Legal; and is but of yeſterday?

Theſe Parties have ſcarce any form'd way of keeping out *Popery*; for what hinders a crafty *Jeſuit* from gathering and modelling a particular Congregation? And what a gap do they leave open for Seducers, who take away all legal Teſts, and admit ſtrangers to officiate upon bare pretence of ſpiritual illumination!

The *Romaniſts* have more powerful ways of drawing men from the *Diſſenting* Parties, than from the *Church* of *England*. For Men ſeparate (too frequently) thro' weakneſs of imagination, for which the *Church* of *Rome* has variety of gratifications. They will offer ſtrictneſſes to the *ſevere*, and *mental Prayer* to thoſe who contemn or ſcruple *Forms*. They have *Myſtical* Phraſes for ſuch, who think they have a new notion when they darken underſtanding with words; and accordingly the third part of a very myſtical Book, written by Father *Benet* a *Capuchin*, was reprinted in *London* in 46, with a (*m*) new Title and without the Authour's Name, and it paſs'd amongſt ſome of the Parties for a Book of very ſublime Evangelical Truths. They uſe much geſture and great ſhew of Zeal in Preaching. They have rough cords and mean garments, bare feet and many other great ſhews of *Self-denial*. They have *Proceſſions* and other *Rites* to humour the foppiſhneſs of others. But our Church

(*m*) A Bright Star centring in Chriſt our Perfection. Printed for *H. Overton*, in Popes-head Alley.

is ſufficient for this encounter. She deſigns to make Men good by making them firſt judicious; but ſome others deſire to bring them to their ſide by catching of thdir imaginations; and ſo ſome new device ſhall, in time, bring them over to a new Party.

Diſſention it ſelf amongſt *Proteſtants* weakens their intereſt; and that which weakens one ſide ſtrengthens another. Many that are wearied with endleſs wrangling, are too apt for quiet ſake to run to *infallibility*. Some *Diſſenters* prepare the way for *Popery* by running into another extreme to avoid it. By decrying *Epiſcopacy*, *Liturgy*, *Feſtivals*, &c. as *Popiſh*, they condemn that as *Popiſh* which is decent and Chriſtian, and ſo bring *Popery* into reputation. For men will be apt to ſay, if ſuch good things be *Popiſh*, ſurely that which is *Popiſh*, is alſo Primitive and Evangelical. What we have examin'd is good, and probably the reſt may be of the ſame kind.

It appears alſo from the Hiſtory of our late Wars, that *Popery* gains ground by the ruin of our Church. For it made ſuch a progreſs in thoſe times, that the *Diſſenters* charge the *Jeſuits* with the King's murther; thereby tacitly owning, that they had ſo great a power over ſome of them, as to make them their inſtruments in it. 'Tis evident to any man that *Popery* was not then rooted out; (*n*) 'tis notorious, that many Prieſts and other *Papiſts* fought and acted for the *Parliament* againſt the *King*; Nay, in 49, there was a deſign to (*o*) ſettle the *Popiſh* Diſcipline in *England* and *Scotland*. The *Papiſts* generally ſheltred themſelves under the Vizor of (*p*) *Independency*. A College of *Jeſuits* was ſettled at (*q*) *Come*

(*n*) Vid. *Rob. Mentit de Salmonet*, Hiſt. des troubles de la grand Bret. lib. 3. p. 165. Short view of the troub. p. 564. Arbit. gov. p. 28. *Whitl.* Mem. p. 279, 280, 282. Exact. Coll. p. 647. (*o*) ibid. p. 405. (*p*) *Edwards*'s Gangr. par. 2. p. 10. (*q*) B. of *Hereſ.* Narrat. to the Lds. p. 7.

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in 52; and 155 were reconciled to *Rome* that year. *Cromwel* (*r*) ſaid, that he had ſome proof that *Jeſuits* had been found amongſt the Diſcontented Parties; and Dr. *Bayly* the *Papiſt* (*ſ*) courted him as the hopes of *Rome*. One of his Phyſicians (*t*) ſaith, he was Treating with the *Papiſts* for *Toleration*, but brake off, becauſe they came not up to his Price, and becauſe he fear'd it would be offenſive. We are (*u*) told alſo that an agreement was made in 49 even with *Owen Oneal* that bloody *Romaniſt*; and that he in purſuance of the Intereſt of the State, rais'd the Siege of *Londonderry*. A great door was open'd to *Romiſh* Emiſſaries, when the Oaths of *Allegiance* and *Supremacy* were by public order taken away; and the Doctrine of the unlawfulneſs of an Oath, reviv'd in thoſe days by (*w*) *Williams*, *Gorton*, &c. help'd equivocating *Papiſts* to an Evaſion; as I fear it may the *Quakers* at this day. It was the *Church* of *England* that kept out *Popery* in thoſe times. The patient ſufferings of her Members prov'd that they were not *Popiſh* or earthly-minded; and the Writings of *Laud*, *Chillingworth*, *Bramhal*, *Coſins*, *Hammond*, &c. kept men ſtedfaſt in the *Proteſtant* Religion.

To this we may add, that the *Papiſts* themſelves think their Cauſe is promoted by our Diviſions, as appears from 2 *Jeſuits*, viz. *Campanella* in his diſcourſe of the *Spaniſh Mon.* cap. 25. p. 157. Printed at *Lond.* in *Engliſh* in 54. and *Contzen*'s Polit. *Lib.* 2. *Cap.* 18. *Sect.* 9. And they act accordingly; for they widen our breaches that themſelves may enter, and hope that we ſhall be diſſolv'd at laſt by

(*r*) *Cromwel*'s Declar. Oct. 31. 1655. (*ſ*) Dr. *Bayly*'s Life of Bp. *Fiſher*. p. 260, 261. (*t*) Elen. mot. Par. 2. p. 347. (*u*) Hiſt. Indep. Part 2. p. 245, &c. (*w*) *Cotton*'s Lr. Exam. p. 4, 5. Simplicit. defence. p. 22. Min. of *Lond.* Teſt. p. 18.

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our diſtempers. They expoſe *Proteſtants* as a *Diſunited* People; and ask men how they can in prudence join with thoſe, who are at Variance among themſelves?

As for the deſign of advancing the *Proteſtant* Religion to greater *Purity* and *Perfection* by diſſetling the Church, it is not likely to be effected for ſix reaſons. *Firſt*, the diſſetling that which is well ſetled, corrupteth Religion by removing *Charity*, which is the Spirit of it. It lets men looſe that cannot govern themſelves; it moves men to *Atheiſm*, *Idolatry* and contempt of the Church, and confirms them in ſin. It expoſes the Church for a prey to the Enemy, as it did formerly in *Africa* and *Egypt*. Thoſe that diſſent from a National Church, generally move for alterations in it, when there is a ferment in the State; and in ſuch ſeaſons a Church may be pull'd in ſunder, but there is not temper enough to ſet it together to advantage. *State-diſſenters* generally begin Revolutions with the pretence of Reforming Religion; and well-meaning Diſſenters (when in ſuch hands) can eſtabliſh nothing, but what pleaſes their ſecular Leaders. A change in the Church naturally produces ſome change in the State; and who can ſecure the event for the better? None can foreſee all the ill conſequences of diſturbances. When the veſſel is ſtirr'd, the lees come up; and Religion is made leſs pure by commotions. Politicians promiſe fair, and uſe conſcientious men to ſerve a turn; but afterwards they take other meaſures. Men may intend well, but by uſing the illegal Arm, they frequently render that which was well ſetled, much worſe by their unhinging of it.

Secondly, in the Times of *Uſurpation*, which began with pretence of a more Pure Religion, our Diſſentions caus'd great Corruptions both in Faith and

and Manners. The War was Preach'd up as the Chriſtian Cauſe; and many believ'd that *God would not lay the greateſt villanies to the charge of an elect perſon.* The inſtances of their extravagancies are endleſs; and the *Lords* and *Commons*, as well as the *Miniſters*, were (*u*) highly ſenſible of them.

Thirdly, if by *Purity* of Religion be meant ſuch Doctrine, Diſcipline and Life, as the *Goſpel* teaches, and a removal of human inventions; that *Purity* is in our Church already: and as for her Injunctions, they are (like thoſe of the *Primitive* Church) Rules of Eccleſiaſtical Wiſdom in purſuance of the general Canons in Holy Writ. But if by Purity of Religion be meant a *fewneſs of parts*; as the *Quakers* believe their way is purer, becauſe they have taken away Sacraments and outward Forms; by the ſame reaſon the *Papiſts* may ſay, that their Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is more pure than that of the *Proteſtants*, becauſe they have taken the Cup from it. But it muſt be conſider'd, that that which makes a *Pure* Church, is like that which makes a pure Medicine; not the fewneſs of the ingredients, but the goodneſs of them, how many ſoever they be, and the aptneſs of them for the procuring of health. Therefore our Church being already *Pure*, the ruin of it will not tend to the purity and advancement of the *Proteſtant* Religion.

Fourthly, the eſtabliſhing of contrary parties by a *Toleration* is not the way to perfect Religion, any more than the ſuffering of divers Errours wou'd be the means of reforming them. One principle only can be true; and a mixture of Sacred and Profane is the greateſt impurity.

Fifthly, Many *Diſſenters* are not like to improve

(*u*) Vid. *Ordin.* Feb. 4. 1646. Min. Teſtim. p. 31.

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Chriſtianity, becauſe they lay aſide the Rules of diſcretion, and rely not on God's aſſiſtance in the uſe of good means; but depend wholly upon immediate illumination without the aids of prudence.

Sixthly, Our Church has already better means to promote *Pure* Religion, than any the *Diſſenters* have propos'd. Any Church may be improv'd in ſmall matters; but 'twere very imprudent to change the preſent model for any that has yet been offer'd. We have all the neceſſaries to Faith and Godlineſs; Primitive diſcipline, decency and order are preſerved; We have as many truly pious Members as any Nation under Heaven, and ſuch excellent Writers and Preachers as God ought to be prais'd for: whereas amongſt the Parties the folly and weakneſs of Preachers is delivered ſolemnly as the dictate of God's Holy Spirit.

I may add alſo, that the *Diſſenters* Doctrine of God's ſecret Decrees, their Ordination by Presbyters without a Biſhop, their long unſtudy'd effuſions, their leaving the Creed out of the *Directory for public Worſhip*, their ſitting at the Lord's Supper (and that ſometimes with the Hat on) their alteration of the Form of giving the holy Elements, and their forbidding the obſervation of Feſtivals, were not ſo conducive to the edifying of the Body of Chriſt, as thoſe things which were in the late Times illegally remov'd by them.

It is eaſy enough to alter a Conſtitution; but 'tis extreme difficult to make a true and laſting improvement.

To conclude, ſince it appears that *Diſſenters* are not like to obtain their ends of eſtabliſhing themſelves, of rooting out *Popery*, and promoting Pure Religion, by overthrowing the Church of *England*; therefore they ought both in Prudence and Charity to endeavour after Union with it.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Of the Neceſſity of living in conſtant Communion with the Eſtabliſh'd Church *of* England.

THAT I may diſcourſe with all poſſible clearneſs, it will be neceſſary before I proceed, to explain a few things. 1. What is meant by a Chriſtian Church. 2. What *Church-Communion* is. 3. What is meant by Fixt Communion and by Occaſinal Communion.

I. Then *a Church is a Body or Society of Men ſeparated from the reſt of the World, and united to God and to themſelves by a Divine Covenant.* It is a *Body* or *Society* in oppoſition to *particular Men* and to a *confus'd multitude.* For tho' it do's conſiſt of particular men, yet thoſe men are conſider'd not in a private capacity, but as united into a regular Society. *For God is not the Authour of confuſion.* And if the meaneſt Societies cannot ſubſiſt without order, much leſs the Church of God, which is a Society inſtituted for the moſt ſpiritual and ſupernatural ends. The *Jewiſh* Church had exact order; and the *Chriſtian* Church with reſpect to the Union and Order of it's parts is not only call'd a *Body*, but a *ſpiritual building, Holy Temple,* and *the Houſe of God.*

But then the Church is *One* body in oppoſition to many bodies. The *Jewiſh* Church was but *One*, and therefore the *Chriſtian*, which is grafted into the *Jewiſh*, is but *One*. The Church is call'd *the Temple of God*, and the Temple was but *One* by the command of God. Chriſt alſo tells us, that there ſhould be but *one fold under one ſhepherd*, Joh. 10. 16. And indeed

indeed it is extremely abſurd to ſay, that the Chriſtian Church, which has the ſame Foundation, the ſame Faith, the ſame Promiſes, the ſame Priviledges; ſhould be divided into ſeparate Bodies of the ſame kind. For certainly where every thing is common, there is *One* Community. 'Tis true, diſtinct men, tho' of the ſame common nature, have diſtinct Eſſences, and this makes them diſtinct perſons; but where the very eſſence of a Body or Society conſiſts in having all things common, there can be but *one* Body. And therefore if *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm, one God and Father of all,* be common to the whole Chriſtian Church; and if no Chriſtian has any peculiar privileges; then there is but *one* Church.

I add, that the Church is a Body or Society of Men *ſeparated from the reſt of the World*; upon which account Chriſtians are call'd the *Choſen* or *Elect* People of God, having a peculiar Faith, Laws, Rites, *&c.* which are not common to the whole World. It is alſo a Society of Men *united to God and to themſelves by a Divine Covenant.* It is united to God, becauſe it is a Religious Society; and the Men are united to themſelves, becauſe they are *one* Society. But the chief thing to be obſerv'd is, that the Union is made by a *Divine Covenant.* Thus God made a Covenant with *Abraham*, of which Circumciſion was the Seal; and the Chriſtian Church is nothing elſe, but ſuch a Society of Men, as are in Covenant with God thro' Chriſt. I ſuppoſe all Men will grant, that God only can make a Church; and that the only viſible way he has of forming a Church is by granting a *Church-Covenant*, which is the Divine Charter whereon the Church is founded; and by authorizing ſome perſons to receive others into this Covenant by ſuch a form of admiſſion as he ſhall inſtitute, which form under the Goſpel is Baptiſm. So that to be taken

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into Covenant with God, and to be receiv'd into the Church is the ſame thing; and he is no Member of the Church, who is not viſibly admitted into God's Covenant.

From what has been ſaid it plainly follows, 1. That a Covenant-State and a Church-State are the ſame thing. 2. That every profeſt Chriſtian, who is receiv'd into Covenant, as ſuch, is a Church-Member. 3. That nothing elſe is neceſſary to make us Members of the Chriſtian Church, but only Baptiſm, which gives us right to all the privileges of the Covenant. 4. That no Church-State can depend upon human Contracts and Covenants, and therefore the *Independent* Church-Covenant between Paſtor and People is no part of the Chriſtian Church-Covenant; becauſe it is no part of the Baptiſmal vow, which is one and the ſame for all Mankind, and the only Covenant which Chriſt has made. And why then do the *Independents* exact ſuch a Covenant of Baptiz'd perſons, before they admit them to their Communion? 5. That it is abſurd to gather Churches out of Churches, which already conſiſt of Baptiz'd perſons. For there is but one Church, which is founded upon a Divine Covenant, and this we are made Members of by Baptiſm; if therefore an *Independent* Church-Covenant be neceſſary, then the Baptiſmal Covenant is of no value, till it be confirm'd by entring into a particular Church-Covenant. 6. That if the Church be founded on one Covenant, then the Church is but one. For thoſe that have an intereſt in the ſame Covenant are Members of the ſame Church; and tho' the Univerſal Church, for Man's conveniency, be divided into ſeveral parts or Congregations, yet it cannot be divided into two or more Churches. So that two Churches which are not Members of each other, cannot partake in the ſame Covenant,

but the divider forfeits his intereſt in it. A Prince indeed may grant the ſame Charter to ſeveral Corporations; but if he confine his Charter to the Members of one Corporation, thoſe who ſeparate from the Corporation, forfeit their intereſt in the Charter. Thus has God granted a Charter or Covenant, and declares that by this one Covenant he Unites all Chriſtians into one Church, into which we are admitted by Baptiſm; and therefore if we ſeparate from this one Church, we forfeit our intereſt in it. God has not made a particular Covenant with the Church of *Geneva*, *France*, or *England*, but with the one Catholic Church; and therefore if we do not live in unity with the Catholic Church, we have no right to the bleſſings promis'd to it.

II. By Church-Communion I mean *Church-Society*. To be in Communion with the Church, is to be a Member of it. And this is call'd *Communion*, becauſe all Church-members have a common right to Church-privileges, and a common obligation to the duties of Church-Members. 'Tis true, this word *Communion* is commonly us'd to ſignify *Praying, hearing and receiving the Sacrament together*; but ſtrictly ſpeaking thoſe Offices are not Communion, but an Exerciſe of Communion. Church-Communion is Church-Union; for as a member muſt be united to the Body, before it can perform the natural action of a member: ſo a man muſt be in Communion with the Church, before he has a right to *Pray*, &c. And therefore, tho' a man that is not in Union or Communion with the Church, ſhou'd perform thoſe Offices; yet the performance of them do's not make him a Member of the Church, but an Intruder. Such Offices are acts of Communion, if perform'd by Church-Members; but not otherwiſe. So that to be in communion with the Church

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is to be a Member of it; and by being a Member a man has a right to the bleſſings promis'd to it, and an obligation to perform the Offices of *Church-Society*, *viz.* obedience to the Churches authority, joining in Prayers, &c. and he that acts otherwiſe, renounces his Communion with it.

From what has been ſaid I obſerve, 1. That Church-Communion principally reſpects not a particular, but the Univerſal Church, which is but one all the World over. For Memberſhip may extend to the remoteſt parts of the World, if the body, whereof we are Members, reach ſo far: and Baptiſm makes us members of the Univerſal Church, becauſe it admits us into the Covenant, which God made with the Univerſal Church. 2. That every act of Chriſtian Communion, ſuch as *praying*, &c. is an act of Communion with the whole Catholic Church, tho' it muſt be perform'd in a particular Congregation, becauſe all Chriſtians cannot meet in one place. Thus do we as Fellow-Members Pray to God the *Common* Father of Chriſtians, in the Name of Chriſt the *Common* Saviour of Chriſtians, for the ſame *Common* bleſſings, for our ſelves and all other Chriſtians. Thus alſo the Supper of the Lord is not a private Supper, but the *Common* Feaſt of Chriſtians, and an act of *Catholic Communion*. 3. That the only reaſon, why I am bound to live in Communion with any particular Church, is becauſe I am a Member of the whole Chriſtian Church. For I muſt live in Communion with the whole Chriſtian Church; and this cannot be done without actual Communion with ſome part of it. So that I have nothing elſe to do but to conſider, whether that part of the Catholic Church wherein I live, be ſo ſound that I may lawfully live in Communion with it; and if it be, I am bound to do ſo under peril of Schiſm from the Ca-

tholic Church. 4. That thoſe Churches which are not Members of each other, are ſeparate Churches; becauſe the Catholic Church being but one, all particular Churches ought to be Members of it. To make this plain, I ſhall lay down ſome few Rules, whereby we may certainly know what Churches are in Communion with each other, and which are Schiſmatical Conventicles.

1. There muſt be but one Church in one place; becauſe private Chriſtians ought to join with thoſe Chriſtians with whom they live; and to withdraw our ſelves from ordinary Communion with the Church in which we live into ſeparate Societies, is to renounce its Communion; and when there is not a neceſſary cauſe for it, is a Schiſmatical ſeparation. Every particular Church muſt have its limits, as every Member in the Body has its proper place: but when there is one Church within the bowels of another, it is a notorious Schiſm. This is the caſe of our *Diſſenters*, who refuſe to worſhip God in the ſame aſſemblies with us. Diſtinct Churches at a diſtance may be of the ſame Communion: but diſtinct Churches in the ſame place can never be of the ſame Communion; for then they wou'd naturally unite. So that all ſeparation from a Church wherein we live, unleſs there be neceſſary reaſons for it, is Schiſm.

'Tis true, a Nation may permit thoſe Foreigners that are among them, to model their Congregations according to the Rules of thoſe Churches, to which they originally belong; and that without any danger of Schiſm. For a bare variety of Ceremonies makes no Schiſm between Churches, while they live in Communion with each other. Now every particular National Church has Authority over her own Members to preſcribe the rules of Worſhip: but as ſhe does not impoſe upon other

other Churches, at a diſtance; ſo ſhe may allow the ſame liberty to the Members of ſuch Foreign Churches, when they live within her juriſdiction. For tho' all true Churches are Members of each other, yet each Church has a peculiar juriſdiction; and therefore for the Church of *England* to allow Foreigners to obſerve their own Rules, is not to allow ſeparate Communions, but to leave them to the Goverment of that Church, to which they belong. So that diſtinct Congregations of Foreigners, who own the Communion of our Church, tho' they obſerve the cuſtoms of their own, are not Schiſmatical, as the ſeparate Conventicles of our *Diſſenters* are.

2. Thoſe are ſeparate Churches, which divide from the Communion of any Church, from any diſlike of its Doctrine, Goverment or Worſhip. For in this caſe they leave the Church, becauſe they think it unſafe to continue one body with it. Two Churches may be in Communion with each other, and yet not actually Communicate together, becauſe diſtance of place will not permit it: but it is impoſſible that two Churches, which renounce each others Communion, or at leaſt withdraw ordinary Communion from each other from a profeſs'd diſlike, ſhou'd ſtill continue in Communion with each other. Becauſe they are oppoſite Societies, founded upon contrary Principles, and acting by contrary Rules, and purſuing contrary ends, to the ruin and ſubverſion of each other.

3. Thoſe are ſeparate Churches which do not own each others Members as their own. The Chriſtian Church is but *one* Houſhold and Family and whoever makes two Families of it, is a Schiſmatic. If Chriſtians in the ſame Kingdom hold ſeparate Aſſemblies under diſtinct kinds of Goverment and different Governours, and condemn each others conſtitution and modes

modes of Worſhip, and endeavour to draw away Members from each other; they cannot be thought to be *one* Church. And indeed we may as well ſay, that ſeveral ſorts of Goverment in the ſame Nation, with diſtinct Governours, diſtinct Subjects and diſtinct Laws, that are always at Enmity and War with each other, are but one Kingdom; as we may ſay, that ſuch Congregations are but one Church.

III. I am to explain what is meant by Fixt and by Occaſional Communion. By fixt Communion the *Diſſenters* underſtand an actual and conſtant Communicating with ſome one particular Church, as fixt Members of it. By occaſional Communion they mean praying, hearing and receiving the Sacrament at ſome other Church (of which they do not own themſelves to be Members) as occaſion ſerves; that is, either to gratiſy their own curioſity, or to ſerve ſome ſecular end, or to avoid the imputation of Schiſm. Now fixt Communion is the only true notion of Communion, for occaſional Communion do's not deſerve the name of Communion. For I have prov'd that he, who is not a Member, cannot perform an act of Communion; and therefore it is as plain a contradiction to talk of an occaſional act of Communion, as of an Occaſional Membership. Since every act of Communion is an act of Communion with every ſound part of the Catholic Church, therefore the exerciſe of Chriſtian Communion is equally fix't and conſtant, or equally occaſional with the whole Catholic Church.

'Tis true, in one ſence we may be Members of a particular Church, that is, we may live under the Goverment of a particular Biſhop in a particular National Church; but yet every act of Communion perform'd in this particular Church is an act of Communion with every ſound part of the Catholic Church.

Church. So that wherever I Communicate, whether in that Church in which I uſually live, or in any other particular Church, where I am accidentally preſent, my Communion is of the ſame nature. Now our ordinary Communion with thoſe Churches where our conſtant abode is, may be call'd fix't Communion; and our Communion with thoſe Churches where we are accidentally preſent, may be call'd occaſional Communion; and all this may be done without Schiſm, becauſe all theſe Churches are Members of each other: but we cannot lawfully join ſometimes with the eſtabliſh'd Church and ſometimes with a ſeparate Congregation; becauſe the caſe is vaſtly different. For the eſtabliſh'd Church and the *Diſſenters* Congregations are not Members of each other, but ſeparate Churches. Now 'tis impoſſible for any man to be a Member of two ſeparate Churches; and whatever acts of worſhip we join in with other Churches, of which we are no Members, they are not properly acts of Communion.

Having thus explain'd the *Three* foregoing particulars, I proceed to the main buſineſs, which was to ſhew, that *it is the indiſpenſable duty of all Engliſh men to live in conſtant Communion with the eſtabliſh'd Church of England.* This I ſhall do by ſhewing,

Firſt, That Communion with ſome Church or other is a neceſſary duty.

Secondly, That conſtant Communion with that Church, with which occaſional Communion is lawful, is a neceſſary duty; from whence I ſhall make it appear,

Thirdly, That it is neceſſary to continue in conſtant Communion with the eſtabliſh'd Church of *England*.

I. Then, it is plain, *that Communion with ſome Church or other is a neceſſary Duty.* Becauſe to be in Communion is to be a Member of Chriſt; and he that is a Member, has a right to the Privileges and an obligation to the duties of a Member; and 'tis certain that Communion in Prayers, *&c.* is none of the leaſt Privileges of Chriſtianity, and that 'tis the duty of a Member to Communicate in Religious Offices. But to put the matter out of all doubt, I ſhall offer *Five* things, to prove that external and actual Communion is a neceſſary duty.

1. Baptiſm makes us Members of the viſible Church of Chriſt; but there can be no viſible Church without viſible Communion, and therefore every viſible Member is bound to viſible Communion, when it may be had. 2. This is Eſſential to the notion of a Church, as it is a Society of Chriſtians. For ſince all Societies are inſtituted for the ſake of ſome common Duties and Offices, therefore ſome duties and offices muſt be perform'd by the Society of Chriſtians; eſpecially ſince the Church conſiſts of different Offices and Officers, as *Paſtors*, &c. *Eph.* 4. 11. which are of no uſe, if private Chriſtians are not bound to maintain Communion with them in all Religious Offices. 3. The nature of Chriſtian worſhip obliges us to Church-Communion. For we are bound to worſhip God according to Chriſt's inſtitution, that is, by the hands of the Miniſtry authoriz'd for that purpoſe, *Acts* 2. 42. and therefore tho' the private Prayers of Church-members are acceptable, yet none but public Prayers offer'd up by the Miniſters are properly the Prayers of the Church and acts of Church-Communion. Nay the Lord's Supper, which is the principal part of God's worſhip, is a Common Supper or Communion-Feaſt, and cannot poſſibly be

be celebrated but in actual Communion. 4. The exerciſe of Church-Authority, which conſiſts in admitting men to, or excluding them from the external acts of Communion, ſuppoſes that Church-members are obliged to viſible Communion. 5. If Separation from Religious Aſſemblies be to break Communion, as it plainly appears to be from 2 *Cor.* 6. 17. 1 *Joh.* 2. 19. *Heb.* 10. 25. then to live in Communion with the Church, requires our actual Communicating with the Church in all Religious duties. Accordingly to have Communion with any, is to partake with them in their Religious Myſteries, 1 *Cor.* 10. 20, 21. ſo that tho' we muſt firſt be in a ſtate of Communion, before we have a right to Communicate; yet we cannot preſerve our Church-ſtate without actual Communion. And a right to Communicate without actual Communion, which is an exerciſe of that right, is worth nothing; becauſe all the bleſſings of the *Goſpel* are convey'd to us by actual Communion.

This is ſufficient to prove the neceſſity of actual Communion with the Church, when it may be had; for when it can't be had, we are not obliged to it. But then the greater difficulty is, whether it be lawful to *ſuſpend Communion* with all, becauſe the Church is divided into Parties. Now a man may as well be of no Religion, becauſe there are different Opinions in Religion; as Communicate with no Church, becauſe the Church is divided into Parties. For 'tis poſſible to know which is a true and ſound part of the Catholic Church; and when we know that, we are bound to maintain Communion with it. Indeed if Diviſions excuſe from actual Communion with the Church, then Church-Communion never was or can be a duty; for there were Diviſions even in the *Apoſtles* times. But the rule is plain; for we

are bound to Communicate with the *Eſtabliſh'd* Church, if it may be done without ſin. The advantage lies on the ſide of Authority, and to ſeparate from ſuch a Church is both diſobedience and Schiſm.

But what is meant by *Suſpending Communion?* Theſe men will not ſay that it is lawful never to worſhip God in any public Aſſemblies during the diviſions in the Church; and therefore they mean, that in caſe of ſuch Diviſions they may refuſe to enter themſelves fixt and ſettled Members of any Church, but Communicate occaſionally with them all. But I have already ſhewn how abſurd this diſtinction of fixt and occaſional Communion is; and that whoever is a Member of the Church is a fixt and not an occaſional Member; and that every act of Communion is an act of fixt Communion. So that when men Communicate occaſionally, as they ſpeak, with all the different Parties of Chriſtians in a divided Church, they either Communicate with none or with all of them. If with none, then they maintain Communion with no Church, which I have prov'd it to be their duty to do: but if they Communicate with all, then they are Members of ſeparate and oppoſite Parties; that is, they are contrary to themſelves, and on one ſide or other are certain to be Schiſmatics.

II. I am now to ſhew in the 2d. place, That *Conſtant Communion is a neceſſary duty, where occaſional Communion is lawful.* Every true Chriſtian is in Communion with the whole Chriſtian Church, that is, is a Member of the whole Church; and therefore he muſt conſtantly perform the acts of Communion in that part of the Church in which he lives. So that he cannot without ſin Communicate only occaſionally with that Church, with which he may and ought

ought to Communicate conſtantly, as being conſtantly preſent there. There cannot be two diſtinct Churches in the ſame place, one for conſtant, and another for occaſional Communion, without Schiſm; and therefore where my conſtant abode is, there my conſtant Communion muſt be, if there be a true and ſincere part of the Catholic Church in that place. For it is not lawful to Communicate with two diſtinct and ſeparate Churches in the ſame place, as for inſtance, ſometimes with the *Church* of *England*, ſometimes with the *Presbyterians*; becauſe this is directly contrary to all the principles of Church-Communion. For to be in Communion with the Church is to be a Member of it; and to be a Member of two ſeparate and oppoſite Churches, is to be as contrary to our ſelves as thoſe ſeparate Churches are to each other; and whoever Communicates with both thoſe Churches, on one ſide or other Communicates in a Schiſm. So that if Schiſm be a very great ſin, and that which will damn us as ſoon as Adultery or Murther, then it muſt needs be unlawful and dangerous to Communicate with Schiſmatics.

Nothing leſs than ſinful terms of Communion can juſtifie our ſeparation from the eſtabliſh'd Church wherein we live; for otherwiſe there cou'd be no end of Diviſions, but men might new model Churches as often as their fancies alter. That is a ſound and Orthodox part of the Catholic Church, which has nothing ſinful in its Communion; otherwiſe no Church can be ſound and Orthodox. Now that Man that ſeparates from ſuch a ſound part of the Church, ſeparates from the whole Church, becauſe the Communion of the Church is but *one*. Since therefore thoſe who Communicate occaſionally with the eſtabliſh'd Church, do thereby own that there

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are no ſinful terms of Communion with it; and ſince he who ſeparates from that eſtabliſh'd Church where there are no ſinful terms of Communion, is guilty of Schiſm; therefore a Man is obliged to join conſtantly with that Church, with which he owns it lawful to Communicate occaſionally.

III. Now if theſe things be true, which I have ſo plainly prov'd, then it will eaſily be made appear in the *Third* place, that *it is neceſſary to continue in conſtant Communion with the eſtabliſh'd Church of England.* For ſince a Man is obliged to join conſtantly with that Church, with which he owns it lawful to join occaſionally; therefore it is plain, that all *Engliſh Men* are obliged to join conſtantly with the eſtabliſh'd *Church* of *England*, becauſe they may lawfully Communicate with it Occaſionally. But if any Man ſay that 'tis not lawful to Communicate occaſionally with the *eſtabliſh'd Church* of *England*, I doubt not to make it appear in the following diſcourſe, that he is greatly miſtaken.

'Tis not my preſent buſineſs to prove, that the *Paſtors* of Diſſenting Congregations ought to ſubſcribe to the *Articles*, &c. For tho' that matter may be eaſily made out, yet 'tis Foreign to my purpoſe; my deſign being only to ſatisfy *Lay-Diſſenters*, and to ſhew that they may lawfully join with our Church, becauſe then it will appear to be their duty to do ſo conſtantly. And certainly if the Caſe of *Lay-Communion* were truly ſtated and underſtood, the People wou'd not be far more averſe to Communion with the Pariſh-Churches, than the Non-Conforming Miniſters, who have often join'd with us. And as the Miniſters by bringing their Caſe to the Peoples, may ſee Communion then to be lawful, and find themſelves obliged to maintain it in a private capacity: ſo the People by perceiving their Caſe not

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to be that of the Miniſters, but widely different from it, wou'd be induced to hold Communion with the Church.

It appears therefore from what I have already ſaid, that if that part of the Church in which we live be a true and ſound part of the Catholic Church, then we are obliged to maintain conſtant Communion with it. And that the *Eſtabliſh'd Church* of *England* is ſuch a true and ſound part of the Catholic Church, even our *Diſſenters* themſelves have fully prov'd. For all or moſt of thoſe, with whom I am to Treat, have join'd in our ſolemn Offices of Devotion; which they cou'd not lawfully do, if our Church were not a true and ſound part of the Catholic Church of Chriſt. But I ſhall not inſiſt upon that perſonal argument; becauſe I deſign to deſcend to particulars, and to ſhew *Firſt*, that our Church is a true and ſound part of the Chriſtian Church, and *Secondly*, that thoſe Pleas which the *Diſſenters* make uſe of to excuſe their ſeparation from her, are vain and frivolous.

Firſt, Then, the *Eſtabliſh'd Church of England is a true and ſound part of the Catholic Church.* That 'tis a *true* Church, appears from the Confeſſion of the moſt Eminent and Sober (*a*) *Non-Conformiſts*; nay the Old *Non-Conformiſts* undertake to (*b*) prove it, and ſo do's the (*c*) Authour of *Jerubbaal*; and if I ſhou'd proceed to particulars, I might fill a Volume

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(*a*) *Bayly*'s Diſſuaſive, c. 2. p. 21. *Corbet*'s Diſcourſe of the Religion of *England*, p. 33. Non-Conformiſts no Schiſmatics, p. 13. See *Ball*'s Friendly Trial, c. 13. p. 306. Letter of Miniſters in *Old England* to Miniſters in *New England*, p. 24. (*b*) A Grave and Sober Confut. p. 1. &c. p. 57. (*c*) *Jerubbaal*, or the Pleader impleaded, p. 18. & 27.

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with (*d*) Teſtimonies. 'Tis true they own her to be a true Church upon different Grounds, becauſe ſome of the *Diſſenting Writers* are for a National, and others for a Congregational Church; but they (*e*) all agree in this that the *Church* of *England* is a true Church, tho' they ſay ſhe is a corrupted one. Nay our (*f*) Brethren do not only grant her to be a true Church, but alſo declare her to be one of the moſt valuable, if not the very beſt in the world. But I ſhall ſay no more of this matter, only I refer the Reader to Mr. *Baxter's Cure of Ch. diviſ. dir.* 56. p. 263.

(*d*) Concerning her Doctrin, See the Opinion of the *Presbyt.* in *Corbet's* Diſcourſe. §. 21. p. 43. *Baxter's* 5 Diſp. *Pref*, p. 6. *of the Independents in the* Peace Offering, p. 12. See alſo *Baxter's* Def. of his Cure, part 1. p. 64. part 2. p. 3. *Wadſworth's* Separ. yet no Schiſm, p. 60, 62. *Throughton's* Apology, c. 3. p. 106. *and of the* Browniſts *in their* Apol. p. 7. *Anno* 1604. *See* alſo *Bayly's* Diſſuaſive, c. 2. p. 20, 33. *Stillingfleet's* Unreaſonableneſs of Separ. part 1. §. 9. p. 31. for Opinions concerning her Worſhip, See *Hilderſham's* Lect. 26. on *Joh.* p. 121. Contin. of Morn. Exerciſe, Serm. 4. p. 91. *Throughton's* Apology, p. 104. Peace Offering, p. 17. for Opinions concerning the Truth, ſufficiency and ability of her Miniſtry, See *Bradſhaw's* Unreaſonableneſs of Separ. p. 16, 27, 37. Grave and Mod. Confut. p. 28. Apologet. Narrat. p. 6. *Cotton's* Infant Baptiſm, p. 181. for the defence of the Ordination of our Miniſtry, See *Jus Divi. Miniſt. Evangel.* part 2. p. 12, 16, 17, 25, &c. Jus Div. regim. Eccleſ. p. 264, &c. *Cawdry's* Independency a great Schiſm, p. 116. and *his* defence of it, p. 35, 37. (*e*) Jus div. Min. Evangel. p. 12, &c. *Brinſly's* Church-Remedy, p. 41, 42. *Cawdry's* Independency a great Schiſm, p. 60, 89, 132, 172. *Tombes's* Theodulia, §. 15, 16. pref. &c. 9. §. 3. *Crofton's* Reformation not Separation p. 10. *and* Bethſhemeſh Clouded, p. 101, &c. Church Refor. p. 42. *Corbet's* account of the Principles, &c, p. 26. *Throughton's* Apology, p. 103. *Baxter's* defence *of his* Cure, part 2. p. 178. *Cotton's* way clear'd, p. 8. *his* Letter, p. 3. *Hooker's* Survey, pref. & part 1. p. 47. *Goodwin* on the *Epheſ.* p. 447, 448, 449. (*f*) Grave and Mod. Confut. p. 6. *Goodwin's* Sion Coll. viſited. *Bradſhaw's* Unreaſonableneſs of the Separation, p. 97.

That

That the Eſtabliſh'd Church is alſo a ſound, as well as a true part of the Catholic Church might eaſily appear by an examination of it; but I ſhall not enter upon ſo large a work, becauſe it is not neceſſary: for I conceive that our *Diſſenters* will be not only willing but forward to acknowledge it, when I ſhall have anſwer'd thoſe objections which they are pleas'd to make againſt our Communion, and ſhewn that thoſe Pleas which they raiſe from them, are by no means ſufficient to make Separation lawful. I proceed therefore to the ſeveral Pleas, and deſign to examine them in their natural order.

CHAP. II.

The uſe of indifferent things in the Worſhip of God, no objection againſt our Communion.

THE Firſt Objection againſt our Communion is drawn from the uſe of indifferent things. Our Adverſaries ſay, that indifferent things may not lawfully be us'd in the worſhip of God, and that our Communion is therefore unlawful, becauſe we require men to uſe ſuch indifferent things. Now that this objection may be fully anſwer'd, I ſhall do four things; *viz.*

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew what is meant by indifferent things.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew that indifferent things may be lawfully us'd in divine Worſhip.

Thirdly, I ſhall conſider how we may know, what things are indifferent in the worſhip of God.

Fourthly, I ſhall ſhew, how we are to determine our ſelves in the uſe of indifferent things with reſpect to the worſhip of God.

I. Then,

I. Then, I ſhall ſhew *what is meant by indifferent things.* All actions are either duties or ſins, or *indifferent*, that is, ſuch as are neither duties nor ſins. Duties or ſins are ſo, either in their own nature or by Divine Law. That which is commanded is a duty; that which is forbidden is a ſin; but that, which is neither commanded nor forbidden, is *indifferent*; becauſe 'tis neither duty nor ſin; and we may either chuſe or refuſe it without ſin. For *where no law is, there is no tranſgreſſion*; Rom. 4.15. Duty is duty, becauſe 'tis commanded; and ſin is ſin, becauſe 'tis forbidden; and indifferent is indifferent, becauſe 'tis neither commanded nor forbidden. So that we may as well know by the ſilence of the Law what is indifferent, as we may know by its Authority what is a duty or a ſin. For where there is no Law for or againſt, the matter is indifferent. As for inſtance, ſuppoſe there ſhould be a diſpute concerning daies ſet apart for the ſervice of God; how muſt this be determin'd, but by the Law of Nature or Revelation? Now if neither the Law of Nature nor the Law of Revelation ſay any thing of the obſervation of ſuch daies, then we are at liberty to obſerve or not to obſerve them.

II. *Indifferent things may be us'd in the Divine worſhip*; as appears, 1. From the conſideration of the Goſpel-rules of worſhip, which (except what relate to the two Sacraments) are taken from the Nature of the thing, and were the ſame in all Ages; *viz.* ſuch as reſpect *Order*, *Decency* and *Edification*. 1 *Cor.* 14.26,40. So that we are no otherwiſe bound, than all the world ever was; and therefore, ſince others have always determin'd the outward circumſtances of worſhip, we have alſo the ſame liberty. The Rules themſelves are general, and the *Apoſtles* rarely deſcend to particulars; but whenever they do, they

they ſhew how far Cuſtom, Charity and the reaſon of the thing ought to govern us; (as in the caſe of a Man's being uncover'd in God's worſhip, 1 *Cor.* 11.4,7.) for they thought it impoſſible or not worth their while, to tie all Nations to the ſame Modes, ſince God may be honour'd by one as well as the other. If it be ſaid, that *when things are determin'd in general, the particulars are therein Virtually determin'd, and ſo are not indifferent*; I anſwer, that then nothing is indifferent, ſince there are general rules about every thing. As for example, all Meats are now lawful to Chriſtians; but yet there are general rules, by which we are determin'd in the uſe of them, ſuch as our own *conſtitution*, &c. but thoſe rules do not make the Meats to be other than indifferent. So there are general rules for God's worſhip; but yet the particulars are indifferent, and prudence is to regulate them. The general rules of *Order, Decency* and *Edification* depend upon variable circumſtances, and may be different according to thoſe circumſtances. That thing may tend *to Order, Decency* and *Edification* in one Country or Age, which in another may tend to the contrary. Thus *being cover'd in the Church*, and the Cuſtom of *Love-Feaſts*, &c. were once thought decent; but afterwards the opinions of Men alter'd. So that *Order, Decency* and *Edification* being changeable things, as circumſtances vary, only general rules can be preſcrib'd; but the particulars muſt be left to Authority to determine.

2. Our Saviour and his *Apoſtles* did uſe indifferent things, which were not preſcrib'd, in Divine Worſhip. Thus he join'd in the Synagogal Worſhip, *John* 18. 20, &c. tho' (if the place it ſelf were at all preſcrib'd) the manner of that Service was not ſo much as hinted at. Thus he us'd the Cup of Charity in the Paſſover, tho' it was not inſtituted;

Luke 22.16. The Feaſt of Dedication was an human inſtitution, yet he vouchſaf'd to be preſent at it. Nay he comply'd with the *Jews* in the very poſture of the Paſſover, which they chang'd to *Sitting*, tho' God had preſcrib'd *Standing*. The *Apoſtles* alſo obſerv'd the hours of Prayer, which were of human inſtitution, *Acts* 3.1. Now if Chriſt and his Apoſtles did thus under the *Jewiſh* Law, which was ſo exact in preſcribing outward Ceremonies; certainly we may do the ſame under the Goſpel. I may add, that the Primitive Chriſtians not only comply'd with the *Jews* in ſuch Rites as were not forbidden, but alſo had ſome ritual obſervations taken up by themſelves. Thus they (*a*) waſh'd the Diſciples feet in imitation of Chriſt, and (*b*) us'd Love-Feaſts; till they thought it convenient to lay them aſide. From whence it appears that preſcription is not neceſſary to make a Rite lawful; 'tis enough if it be not forbidden.

If it be ſaid, that theſe uſages of the Chriſtian Church were *civil obſervances*, and us'd as well out of God's worſhip as in it; and therefore what there needed no inſtitution for, might be lawfully us'd without it; I anſwer, 1. That this juſtifies moſt of our uſages; for a white Garment was us'd in civil caſes as a ſign of *Royalty* and *Dignity*, &c. 2. A civil obſervance, when us'd in Religious worſhip, either remains civil, when ſo apply'd; or is religious, when ſo apply'd. If it be civil, then kneeling in God's worſhip is not religious, becauſe 'tis a poſture us'd in civil matters. If it be religious, then a rite that is not preſcrib'd, may be us'd in worſhip to a religious end. 3. 'Tis evi-

(*a*) 1 Tim. 5. 10. *Ambroſ.* De Sacram. lib. 3. cap. 1. (*b*) *Tertull.* De Orat. cap. 14.

dent

dent, that (*c*) neither the waſhing of feet nor the holy Kiſs were us'd as civil rites; and that the latter is call'd by the Fathers *the Seal of Prayer* and *the Seal of Reconciliation*. 4. If a rite's being *civil* makes it lawful in Divine worſhip, then any civil rite may be us'd in worſhip, and conſequently all the ridiculous practices of the Church of *Rome* wou'd be warrantable. 5. If a rite's being *civil* makes it lawful in worſhip, then how can our Adverſaries ſay, that *nothing is to be us'd in worſhip, but what is preſcrib'd by* GOD, *except the Natural circumſtances of action?* For there are many civil Rites which are not natural circumſtances of action. Feaſting and Salutation are civil uſages; but Divine worſhip can be perform'd without them. And if theſe and the like were antiently us'd in worſhip, then we have the ſame liberty to introduce ſuch cuſtoms.

3. If things indifferent, tho' not preſcrib'd, may not be lawfully us'd in God's worſhip, then we cannot lawfully join with any Church in the World. For all Churches do in ſome inſtances or other take the liberty of uſing, what the *Scripture* has no where requir'd. Thus the (*d*) antients obſerv'd the Feaſts of the Paſſion, Reſurrection, *&c.* Stood in their devotions on the Lord's Day, *&c.* Theſe things they all agree'd in, and thought it unlawful to act againſt an univerſal practice. Beſides, ſome Churches had peculiar cuſtoms within the bounds of their own Communion. The Church of *Rome* faſted on *Saturdays*, others indifferently on any Day. That of *Milan* waſh'd the feet of perſons to be Baptiz'd, but that of *Rome* did not. Thus in our dates ſome re-

(*c*) *Buxtorf.* Exerc. Hiſt. Sac. Cæn. (*d*) Vid. *Auguſt.* Epiſt. 118, 119. *Baſil.* De Sp. S. cap. 27. *Ambroſ.* De Sacram. lib. 2. cap. 7. & lib. 3. cap. 1.

ceive the Lord's Supper kneeling, others ſtanding, *&c.* So that if we muſt have an Inſtitution for every thing done in the worſhip of God, and if we muſt join in nothing which has it not, then we cannot be members of any Church in the World. Nor indeed can I learn how a Chriſtian can, with a good conſcience, perform any part of God's worſhip, if this principle be admitted for true. For habits and geſtures are not determin'd in *Scripture*, and God's worſhip cannot be perform'd without them; and if they are unlawful, for *not being commanded*, then a man muſt ſin every time he Praies or receives the Sacrament.

Nay thoſe that condemn the uſe of *ſuch things as are not commanded*, do in their practice confute their opinion. For where, I pray, are they commanded to ſprinkle the Children that are Baptiz'd? or to receive the Lord's Supper ſitting? or to uſe conceiv'd Prayers? or to touch and kiſs the Book in Swearing? Or to enter into a particular Church-covenant? Nay where do they find that the *Scripture* ſaith, that *there is nothing lawful in divine worſhip, but what is preſcrib'd*; or that *what is not commanded is forbidden?* Where are we told, that God will be angry with us for doing that, which he has not forbidden? Our brethren themſelves will allow, that the time and place of God's worſhip may be preſcrib'd by Authority; and why then may not neceſſary circumſtances, ſuch as geſtures and habits, be thus determin'd, tho' they be not commanded? Certainly the command of a lawful power does not make that unlawful, which was not forbidden, and by conſequence was lawful before.

They ſay indeed, that *Nadab* and *Abihu* ſinn'd, becauſe they offer'd *ſtrange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not*, &c. *Lev.* 10. 1, *&c.* and therefore there muſt be a command to make any thing lawful

lawful in divine worſhip. But to this I anſwer, that the phraſe *not commanded* is conſtantly apply'd to ſuch things as are *abſolutely forbidden.* The fire alſo is call'd *ſtrange*; which phraſe when apply'd to matters of worſhip, ſignifies as much as *forbidden.* Thus *ſtrange incenſe*, Exod. 30. 9, 24. is ſuch as was forbidden, becauſe it was not rightly made; *ſtrange vanities* is but another word for *ſtrange Gods*, Jer. 8. 19. and thus the *fire* of theſe Men was *ſtrange*, that is *forbidden fire.* For there was ſcarce any thing belonging to the Altar, of which more is ſaid than of the fire burning upon it. *Lev.* 9. 24. & 6. 12. & 16. 12. 'Twas lighted from Heaven, and was to be always burning. When atonement was to be made by incenſe, the coals were to be taken from thence, and therefore ſurely 'twas peculiar to thoſe offices. Nay juſt after the account of the extraordinary way of lighting the fire, follows this relation of *Nadab* and *Abihu*, to ſhew wherein they offended. For before it was the office of *Aaron*'s Sons to put fire upon the Altar; and now they ſuffer'd for attempting to do as formerly, becauſe Heaven had declar'd to the contrary. There was alſo a Conformity between the puniſhment and the ſin; for as fire from the Lord conſum'd the burnt-offering, ſo fire from the Lord conſum'd them. So that their caſe ſeems like that of *Uzzah*, 1 Chron. 13. 7, 10, & 15. 2. for they acted contrary to God's command. I may add that in other places alſo the phraſe *not commanded* is apply'd to things forbidden; ſuch as are call'd abominations, that is, idolatrous worſhip, falſe Prophets, &c. *Deut.* 17. 3, 4. *Jer.* 7. 31. & 19. 5. & 32. 35. ſo that ſince the phraſe is always ſpoken of things plainly forbidden, 'tis a ſign, that 'tis rather God's forbidding that made them unlawful, than his not commanding.

But, ſay they, why ſhou'd the phraſe be us'd at all in ſuch matters, if *not commanded* is not the ſame as forbidden? To this I anſwer, that *not commanded* is only a ſofter way of ſpeaking, which is uſual in all languages, and frequently to be met with in *Scripture*. Thus God ſaies, that hypocrites chuſe *that in which I delighted not, Iſ.* 66. 4. that is, *their abominations*, as we read, *v.* 3. So the Apoſtle ſaies, the *Gentiles* did *things not convenient, Rom.* 1. 28, 29. that is, envy, murther, &c. And the phraſe *not commanded* is of the like kind, when the things it's apply'd to, are alike abominable. Beſides, if *not commanded* be the ſame as *forbidden*, then the very notion of indifferent things is deſtroy'd, and there is no indifferent thing in the world; becauſe a thing indifferent is, as I ſaid before, that which is neither commanded nor forbidden.

But 'tis ſaid, that all things not commanded in God's Word are additions to it; and that ſuch additions are unlawful, becauſe God ſaies, *Ye ſhall not add unto the Word which I command you, neither ſhall ye diminiſh ought from it*, Deut. 4. 2. and the *Scribes* are condemn'd, *Matth.* 15. 9. becauſe they taught *for doctrines the Commandments of Men.* Now to this I reply, that if by *adding to the Word* they mean doing what the Word forbids; or appointing ſomewhat elſe inſtead of what God has appointed; or expounding away the deſign of the Word; or making that which is not the Word of God, to be of equal authority with it, as the *Scribes* did; or giving the ſame efficacy to human inſtitutions as God does to his; if I ſay by *adding to the Word* they mean any of theſe things, we think that *adding to the Word* is unlawful. And if by *diminiſhing* they mean neglecting what the Word requires, or thinking God's inſtitutions not compleat,

pleat, we think that *diminiſhing from the Word* is unlawful. But if they ſay, that doing any thing *not commanded* in the worſhip of God, tho' it have none of the ingredients before ſpoken of, is a ſinful *adding to the Word*; we therein differ from them. 1. Becauſe Chriſt and his Apoſtles and all Churches have done things not commanded. 2. Becauſe this deſtroys the nature of indifferent things; which cannot be *indifferent*, if they be ſinful additions to God's Word. Beſides, *adding* is adding to the Subſtance, and *diminiſhing* is diminiſhing from the Subſtance; ſo that when the Subſtance remains intire without debaſement or corruption, it cannot be call'd an addition or diminution in the *Scripture*-ſence. However our Adverſaries themſelves are really guilty of what they charge upon us; for they forbid, as abſolutely unlawful, to uſe any thing in the worſhip of God, which is not preſcrib'd; and certainly he that forbids what the *Scripture* do's not forbid, do's as much add to it, as he that commands what the *Goſpel* doth not command.

As for the Words of the 2d Commandment, *Thou ſhall not make unto thee any graven image, &c.* they do by no means prove, that we muſt worſhip God by no other Religious rites, than what he has preſcrib'd. 'Tis true, we are there commanded to worſhip none beſides God, and to worſhip God in a manner ſutable to his Nature and agreeable to his Will: but ſurely rites inſtituted by Men for the Solemnity of Gods Service are not there forbidden. It has been ſaid indeed, that *Ceremonies, being invented by Man, are of the ſame nature with images*; but we muſt obſerve, 1. That Images are expreſly forbidden, and Ceremonies are not. 2. That Images tend to debaſe God in the

thoughts of thoſe that worſhip him after that Manner, but Ceremonies do not; and therefore Ceremonies are not a breach of the 2d. Commandment. Ceremonies are not Eſſential parts of Divine Worſhip, but only circumſtances of it; and certainly our Brethren cannot find fault, that ſuch circumſtances are us'd to further Devotion. For they themſelves do plead for *ſitting* at the Lord's Supper, *&c.* upon this very account, becauſe they think ſuch external circumſtances do further Devotion.

But, ſay they, if there be not a Rule for all things belonging to the Worſhip of God, the Goſpel wou'd be leſs perfect than the Law; and *Chriſt* wou'd not be ſo faithful in the care of his Church, as *Moſes*, who was *faithful in all his houſe*, Heb. 3. 2. Therefore as *Moſes* laid down all the particular Rules for God's Worſhip under the Law, ſo has *Chriſt* under the Goſpel; and it is as dangerous to add, as to detract from them. Now to this I anſwer, that the deſign of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* is to compare *Moſes* and *Chriſt*, or the Law and the Goſpel, and to ſhew the exact Correſpondence between the Type and the Antitype; and not to ſhew that our *Saviour* had as particularly preſcrib'd the Order of Chriſtian Worſhip, as *Moſes* had that of the Jewiſh. The Goſpel is not ſo particular in the Circumſtantials of Worſhip as the Law was; and we muſt not affirm that it is, becauſe we wou'd have it ſo. We cannot prove, that *Chriſt* has actually done this, becauſe we imagine that he ſhou'd have done it. We may better argue, that ſince theſe things are not expreſly determin'd under the Goſpel, as they were under the Law; therefore they are left to the determination of our Superiours, whom we are commanded to obey. Nor are the ſufficiency of *Scri-*

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pture and faithfulneſs of *Chriſt*, to be judg'd of by what we fancy they ſhou'd have determin'd, but by what they have. Since we do not find in the *Scriptures* ſuch particular preſcriptions in Baptiſm as in Circumciſion, nor in the Lord's Supper as in the Paſſover, nor in our Prayers as in the *Jewiſh* Sacrifices; therefore 'tis plain, that the ſufficiency of *Scripture* and faithfulneſs of *Chriſt* do reſpect ſomewhat elſe, and that they are not the leſs for want of them. *Chriſt* was faithful as *Moſes to him that appointed him*, in performing what belong'd to him as a *Mediatour*, and diſcovering to Mankind in *Scripture* the Method and Means, by which they may be ſav'd; and the ſufficiency of *Scripture* appears in its being a ſufficient means to that end, and it's putting Men into ſuch a State, as will render them capable of attaining to it.

III. I am next to conſider, *how we may know, what things are indifferent in the worſhip of* God. To this I might anſwer briefly, that in things forbidden by human Authority, the not being requir'd in Scripture; and in things requir'd by human Authority, the not being forbidden in Scripture, is a Rule, whereby we may know, what things are indifferent in the worſhip of God. But becauſe things in their nature indifferent, may become unlawful in their uſe and application, therefore I ſhall add the following particulars.

1. Things are call'd *indifferent* from their general Nature, and not as if they were never unlawful; for they are lawful or unlawful, as they are us'd and apply'd. 2. A thing may not be requir'd or forbidden by one Law, which is by another; and that may be indifferent in one ſtate which is not in another; and therefore when we ſay a thing is indifferent, we muſt conſider the Caſe and Law

which it reſpects. Thus to diſcourſe about common affairs is a thing indifferent; but it is unlawful, when practis'd in the Church, and in the midſt of Religious Solemnities. 3. As there are certain Rules, which we are to reſpect in common converſation, and which even in that caſe ought to tie us up in the uſe of things (otherwiſe) indifferent: ſo there are ſome Rules, which we muſt have a regard to in the adminiſtration of Divine worſhip. And as in common matters the nature of the thing, in actions the end, in converſation the circumſtances are to be heeded, *viz.* time, place, perſons; as when, where, before whom we are cover'd and uncover'd, *&c.* ſo in ſacred matters, the nature of the thing, in the decency and ſolemnity of the worſhip; the end for which it was appointed, in the Edification of the Church; and the Peace, Glory and Security of that, are to be reſpected. By theſe Rules we are to judge of the indifferency of things in God's ſervice. But becauſe theſe Rules are general; and Decency, Edification and Order are variable according as circumſtances alter; and becauſe different men have different opinions of them; therefore I ſhall give more particular Directions.

1. Some things are ſo notoriouſly agreeable or oppoſite to Decency, Edification and Order, that common reaſon will be able to judge of them. Thus 'tis plain, that a tumultuous ſpeaking of many together is leſs for Edification, and has more of confuſion, than the orderly ſpeaking of one by one; and ſervice in an unknown Tongue do's leſs conduce to Edification, than when 'tis in a Language commonly underſtood. But, 2. There are other things which are not ſo evident; and therefore for the clearing of them we may obſerve;

1. That

1. That Decency, Order and Edification depend upon each other, and muſt not be conſider'd aſunder. And therefore we muſt not throw down the bounds of public Order, and bring all things into confuſion, for the ſake of Edification, or becauſe we think any matter indecent. What is againſt public Order and Practice, is for that reaſon indecent, were there no other reaſon to make it ſo. So that if we wou'd judge aright of either of theſe, we muſt judge of them together; and as Order alone is not enough to make a thing Decent, which is in it ſelf indecent; ſo Decency or particular Edification is not enough to recommend that, which cannot be introduc'd without the diſturbance of public Order.

2. That when the caſe is not apparent, we ſhou'd rather judge by what is contrary, than by what is agreeable to theſe rules. We know better, what things are not, than what they are; and therefore, ſince we better know what is indecent than decent, diſorderly than orderly, againſt Edification than for it, it's beſt to take this courſe in judging about it. As for inſtance, if we wou'd inquire into the decency of the poſture to be us'd in the Lord's Supper, or the Edification that may ariſe from it; it may not perhaps be ſo eaſy for a Man to judge of the greater Decency and Edification of *kneeling* or *ſitting*; but if he find that the poſture injoin'd is not indecent or deſtructive of Piety, and of the ends for which the ordinance was inſtituted, he is therewith to ſatisfy himſelf. *If*, ſays St. *Auſtin*, Epiſt. 118. *what is injoyn'd be not againſt Faith or good manners, it is to be accounted indifferent*; and I may add, if it be not indecent, diſorderly and deſtructive of Piety, it's lawful.

3. That

3. That if the caſe be not apparent, and we cannot eaſily find out how the things injoin'd are decent, *&c.* we are obliged to be cautious how we condemn an action, which thoſe men practice whom for other things we cannot condemn. When we find that they argue, and produce Experience and Reaſon for it, and we have a whole Church againſt our Opinion, we ſhou'd be apt to think the fault may be in our ſelves; and that 'tis for want of underſtanding and inſight, for want of uſe and Tryal, and by reaſon of ſome prejudices, that we thus differ in our judgment from them. We ſee what little things do determine men ordinarily in theſe matters, how addicted they are to their own ways and cuſtoms; and therefore we ſhou'd think again. So may we be reconcil'd to the rites of a Church, as we are to the cuſtoms and habits of a Nation, which at firſt ſeem as indecent, as the Ceremonies of a Church can do. In ſhort, we have reaſon to ſuſpect, 'tis a *Zeal without Knowledge*, when we preſume to ſet our Judgment, Reaſon and Experience againſt the Judgment, Reaſon and Experience of the Chriſtian World.

IV. I am now to ſhew in the laſt place, *how we are to determine our ſelves in the uſe of indifferent things, with reſpect to the worſhip of* GOD.

1. Then as particular Perſons, ſolitary and alone, we may forbear to uſe what is indifferent, when no Law of Man requires it; and we may freely uſe it, when no Law of Man forbids it. 2. In our converſation with others we muſt ſo uſe our Liberty, as ſhall be leſs to the prejudice and more to the benefit of thoſe we converſe with. We may act or forbear in complyance with Perſons of weaker Judgment. But 3. as we are Members of a Church, we are to obey the commands of it. For if the

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not grieving a Brother or endangering his Soul obliges us to reſtrain the exerciſe of our Liberty, much more do's the Peace of the Church oblige us to the ſame. *Let every one pleaſe his neighbour, for his good to Edification*, Rom. 15. 2. that is, to his improvement in Knowledge, Grace, or Piety, and the promoting of Concord and Charity. Now Edification is chiefly ſo with reſpect to the whole, as the Church is *the Houſe of* God, 1 Pet. 2. 5. and every Chriſtian is a Stone of it, and therefore ought to ſtudy what may be for the Edification of the whole. And how is that, but by promoting Love, Peace and Order, and taking care to preſerve it? For ſo we (*e*) find Peace and Edifying, Comfort and Edification, Union and Edification join'd together, as the one promotes the other. And therefore as the good and Edification of the Church is to be always in our Eye; ſo 'tis the Rule by which we ought to act in all things lawful; and to that end we ſhou'd comply with its cuſtoms, obſerve its directions, and obey its orders, without reluctancy and oppoſition.

If any Man ſeem, or have a mind *to be contentious, we have no ſuch cuſtom, neither the Churches of God*; 1 Cor. 11. 16. Whatever might be urg'd, the *Apoſtle* concludes, *we have no ſuch Cuſtom*, &c. The Peace of the Church is to a peaceable mind ſufficient to put an end to all diſputes about it; and ſince the Peace of the Church depends upon the obſervation of its cuſtoms, that is infinitely to be preferr'd before ſcrupuloſity and niceneſs, or a meer inclination to a contrary practice. There muſt be ſomewhat eſtabliſh'd; and *the very change*

(*e*) 1 Cor. 14. 26. 2 Cor. 10. 8. 1 Tim. 1. 4. Rom. 14. 19. 1 Theſſ. 5. 11. Eph. 4. 12, 16.

of a cuſtom, tho' it may happen to profit, yet doth diſturb by its Novelty, ſaies St. *Auſtin*, Epiſt. 118. Infirmity in a Church is better than confuſion; and in things which neither we nor the worſhip are the worſe for, but the Church the better for obſerving, Peace and Order are to be preferr'd far before nicetie's; and certainly neither we nor the ſervice of God can be the worſe for what God has concluded nothing in. In a word, what St. *Auſtin* and his Mother receiv'd from St. *Ambroſe* is worthy to be recommended to all; *That in all things not contrary to Truth and good Manners, it becomes a good and prudent Chriſtian to practiſe according to the cuſtom of the Church where he comes, if he will not be a ſcandal to them, nor have them to be a ſcandal to him. Epiſt.* 118, & 86.

And if the cuſtom and practice of a Church muſt oblige a good Man; much more ought it ſo to do, when 'tis Eſtabliſh'd by Law, and back'd by Authority. For then to ſtand in oppoſition, is not only an Offence but an Affront; 'tis to contend, whether we or our Superiours ſhall Govern; and what can be the iſſue of ſuch a temper, but diſtraction? 'Tis pleaded, that *there ſhou'd be a Liberty left to Chriſtians in things undetermin'd in Scripture*; but there are things which they muſt agree in, or elſe there can be nothing but confuſion. For inſtance, what Order can there be, if Superiours may not determine, whether Prayers ſhall be long or ſhort, and the like? To conclude, when the Scripture do's neither require nor forbid an action, we ought to obey the Orders of the Church in the performance or omiſſion of it.

But 'tis ſaid, That if we be reſtrain'd in the uſe of indifferent things, we are alſo reſtrain'd in our Chriſtian Liberty, which the Apoſtle exhorts us to

ſtand

ſtand faſt in, Gal. 5. 1. Now to this I anſwer; 1. This is no argument to thoſe that ſay, there is nothing indifferent in the worſhip of God; for then there is no matter of Chriſtian Liberty in it. 2. A reſtraint of our Liberty, or receding from it, is of it ſelf no violation of it. The moſt ſcrupulous Perſons plead, that the ſtrong ought to bear with the weak, and give them no offence by indulging that Liberty, which others are afraid to take; and why, I pray, is a Man's Liberty more damaged, when reſtrain'd by Superiours, than when 'tis reſtrain'd by *another's Conſcience*? If it be ſaid, that the Superiour's command reſtrains it perpetually; I anſwer, that the caſe is ſtill the ſame; for the Apoſtle who knew his own Liberty, ſuppoſes that it wou'd not be damnify'd, tho' it were reſtrain'd for his whole life. For, ſaies he, *if Meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no Fleſh while the World ſtandeth*; 1 Cor. 8. 13. and this he wou'd not have ſaid, had he not thought it conſiſtent with *ſtanding faſt in that Liberty*, &c. 3. *Chriſtian Liberty* is indeed nothing elſe, but freedom from the reſtraints, which the *Jewiſh Law* laid upon men. This is that Liberty which we are exhorted to *ſtand faſt in*; and I think, that in obeying the orders of our Church, there is no danger of *Judaiſm*. But we muſt note that Chriſtian Liberty conſiſts, not in our being freed from the *act* of obſerving the *Jewiſh Law*; but in being freed from the *neceſſity* of obſerving it. For the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians did obſerve it for ſome time upon prudential conſiderations; but they did ſo, not out of neceſſity, but in condeſcenſion to their weak Converts. And if they cou'd obſerve ſome *Judaical* Rites without infringing their Chriſtian Liberty; certainly we may ſafely uſe a few indifferent Ceremonies.

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From what has been ſaid it plainly appears, that the uſe of indifferent things is no objection againſt living in Communion with our Eſtabliſh'd Church; and this is enough to ſatisfy thoſe Perſons, who upon no other account, than that of a few harmleſs impoſitions, are guilty of ſeparation from her. But becauſe they have ſome particular objections againſt ſome particular things impos'd by her, therefore I ſhall not ſatisfy my ſelf with proving the lawfulneſs of uſing indifferent things in general, but endeavour to ſatisfy all their ſcruples which relate to ſingle inſtances, as I ſhall have occaſion to treat of them in the following Chapters.

CHAP. III.

Of the Lawfulneſs and Expediency of Forms of Prayer.

THE next objection againſt our Communion is the uſe of *Forms of Prayer*. This the *Diſſenters* judge to be unlawful, or at leaſt not expedient; and they think it a ſufficient excuſe for their ſeparation from us. I ſhall therefore in this Chapter endeavour to rectify their miſtakes; 1. By ſhewing that *both Scripture and Antiquity do warrant Forms of Prayer*. 2. By anſwering their objections againſt Forms of Prayer. And 3. by proving that *the impoſition of Forms of Prayer may be lawfully comply'd with.*

Firſt then I ſhall ſhew, that *both Scripture and Antiquity do warrant Forms of Prayer*. The *Diſſenters* indeed require us to produce ſome poſitive command of Scripture for the uſe of *Forms of Prayer*; but this is needleſs, becauſe I have ſhewn in the fore-

foregoing Chapter, that things *not commanded* may be lawfully us'd in Divine worſhip. However, for their full ſatisfaction I ſhall endeavour to prove theſe *Two* things;

1. That *ſome Forms of Prayer* are commanded in *Holy Scripture*.

2. That tho' no Forms were commanded, yet Forms are as Lawful as *extempore* Prayers.

I. Then, *ſome Forms of Prayer* are commanded in *Holy Scripture*. I do not ſay that God's Word commands us to uſe none but Forms; but I affirm that ſeveral Forms of Prayer are injoin'd in God's Word. Thus *Numb.* 6. 23, &c. the Prieſt is commanded to Pray for the People in this very Form of words, *The Lord bleſs thee*, &c. And *Deut.* 21. 7, 8. the People are injoin'd to ſay, *Be merciful, O Lord*, &c. and 26. 13, &c. *I have brought*, &c. *Look down from thy Holy*, &c. *David* alſo by Divine inſpiration appointed the Book of *Pſalms* for the public ſervice, as appears by the Titles of many of them. And tho' ſome of them have no Titles at all, yet we find they were deliver'd by *David* into the hands of *Aſaph* and his Brethren, for Forms of Praiſe and Thankſgiving, 1 *Chron.* 16. 7. and accordingly *Hezekiah* commanded the *Levites* to make uſe of them, 2 *Chron.* 29. 30. This Liturgy alſo was renew'd by *Ezra*, *Ezr.* 3. 10, 11. Beſides our Saviour ſaies, *When ye Pray, ſay, Our Father*, &c. in which he do's as plainly preſcribe that very Form, as 'tis poſſible. Nay had he ſaid, *uſe this Form*, it cou'd not have been more expreſſive of his intention to impoſe it as a Form.

If it be ſaid, that the Lord's Prayer is not a Form, but only a Pattern or Directory of Prayer; becauſe our Saviour, *Matt.* 6. 9. commanded his Diſciples to Pray *after this manner*, *Our Father*, &c. I anſwer,

ſwer, 1. When the ſame matter is mention'd ambiguouſly in one Text, and plainly in another, then the doubtful or ambiguous Text muſt be determin'd by the plain one. Now οὕτως προσεύχεσθε, Matt. 6. 9. may be as well tranſlated *Pray in theſe words*, as *Pray after this manner*; but I confeſs, we cannot certainly know from that Text, whether *Chriſt* commands us to uſe that very Form, or one like it. But then the words, *Luke* 11. 2. *When ye Pray, ſay, Our Father*, &c. are ſo expreſs a command to uſe that very Form, that nothing can be plainer; and therefore the other Text muſt be determin'd by them. 2. Our Saviour gave this Prayer not after the manner of a Directory, but of a Form. Had he deſign'd it for a Directory, he wou'd have bidden them to call upon God for ſuch and ſuch things: whereas he gives them a Form'd Prayer, and bids them ſay it; and we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that he intended we ſhou'd uſe it as a Form, ſince he gave it as ſuch. 3. Tho' the words in St. *Matthew* were only a Directory, yet thoſe in St. *Luke* are a Form of Prayer. For the former were deliver'd in the Sermon upon the Mount, in the ſecond year after his Baptiſm; but the latter upon another quite different occaſion in the third year after it. Therefore 'tis probable, that the Diſciples underſtood thoſe in St. *Matthew* only as a Directory; and requeſted our Saviour afterwards to give them a Form. For, 4. the occaſion of *Chriſt*'s giving them this Prayer in St. *Luke*, was their requeſting him to *Teach them to pray, as* John *taught his Diſciples*. For 'twas the cuſtom of the *Jewiſh* Doctors to Teach their Diſciples a particular Form of Prayer; and St. *John* had done the ſame, and the Diſciples deſire, that *Chriſt* wou'd do ſo too. For neither St. *John*'s, nor our Saviour's Diſciples cou'd

be

be ignorant how to Pray; but their requeſt was, that *Chriſt* wou'd give them his particular Form according to the *Jewiſh* cuſtom; and this Form he gave them, which we call the Lord's Prayer.

But 'tis objected, that ſuppoſing our Saviour did preſcribe it as a Form, yet it was only *for a time*, till they ſhou'd be more fully inſtructed and enabled to Pray by the coming of the *Holy Spirit*. For, ſay they, before *Chriſt*'s Aſcenſion the Diſciples had ask'd nothing in his Name, *Joh.* 16. 24. but all Prayers after *Chriſt*'s Aſcenſion were to be offer'd *in his Name*, Joh. 14. 13, 14. & 16. 23. Now this Prayer has nothing of his Name in it; and therefore was not deſign'd to be us'd after his Aſcenſion; and accordingly, ſay they, in all the New Teſtament we have not the leaſt intimation of the Diſciples uſing this Form. But this objection is of no force, if we conſider the following particulars.

1. That our Saviour has not given us the leaſt intimation, that he preſcrib'd this Form only for a time, and not for continual uſe. And if we may pronounce *Chriſt*'s Inſtitution to be null without his Authority, then Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper may be temporary preſcriptions, as well as the Lord's Prayer. Whatever *Chriſt* has inſtituted without limitation of time, do's alwaies oblige.

2. That his not inſerting his own Name into it, is no Argument at all, that he never intended it ſhou'd be us'd after his Aſcenſion. For to *Pray in Chriſt's Name* is to Pray in his Mediation, depending upon his Merits and Interceſſion for the acceptance of our Prayers; and therefore Prayers may be offer'd up in *Chriſt*'s Name, tho' we do not name him. Thus without doubt the Diſciples Pray'd in his Name, *Acts* 4. 24. tho' his Mediation is not mention'd. 'Tis true, his Name is not expreſ-

ſed in the Lord's Prayer; becauſe when he gave it, he was not yet Aſcended, and his Diſciples were not to ask in his Name, till after his Aſcenſion: but now that he is Aſcended, we can as well offer it in his Name, as if it had been expreſs'd in it. Nay 'tis ſo fram'd, that now after his Aſcenſion, when the Doctrine of his Mediation was to be more fully explain'd, we cannot offer it at all, but in and thro' his Mediation. For God is peculiarly *our Father* in and thro' *Jeſus Chriſt*. And therefore *Chriſt*'s not inſerting his own Name, do's by no means prove, that he did not deſign it for a ſtanding Form.

3. That tho' the *Scriptures* do not mention the Apoſtles and Diſciples uſing the Lord's Prayer, yet this is no argument either that they did not uſe it, or that they did not believe themſelves obliged to uſe it. For we may as well conclude from the ſilence of *Scripture*, that they did not Baptize *in the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*, tho' *Chriſt* had commanded them ſo to do; as we may conclude, that they did not uſe the Lord's Prayer, tho' *Chriſt* commanded them to ſay, *Our Father*, &c. Eſpecially if we conſider, that thoſe who liv'd neareſt the Apoſtolical Ages, and ſo were the moſt competent Judges of what was done in them, where the *Scripture* is ſilent, did alwaies uſe this Form in their Public Prayers, and believe themſelves obliged to do ſo. Now that this Prayer was look't upon as a ſtanding Form, to be perpetually us'd, appears from *Tertull.* de Orat. St. *Cyprian* de Orat. Dom. St. *Cyril*, Cat. Myſt. 5. St. *Jerom.* in Pelag. l. 3. St. *Auſtin.* Hom. 42. 50. Epiſt. 59. St. *Chryſoſt.* de Simult. St. *Gregory* Ep. lib. 7. cap. 6. And to be ſure, they who believ'd the Inſtitution of it to be perpetually obliging, cou'd

cou'd not doubt, but that it was conſtantly us'd in the Apoſtolic Age. And methinks 'tis very ſtrange, that had the Inſtitution been temporary, the Church of *Chriſt* for Fifteen hundred Years, ſhou'd never be wiſe enough to diſcover it; and it ſeems to me a very high preſumption for us to determin againſt the conſtant belief and practice of the Church in all Ages, without the leaſt warrant ſo to do, either from our *Saviour* or his Apoſtles.

But it is Objected yet farther, that *tho' Forms of God's appointing may and ought to be us'd, yet Forms of Man's compoſure ought not: and that we may as well appoint New Scripture for Public inſtruction, becauſe the inſpir'd perſons did ſo; as we may appoint new Forms for Public worſhip, becauſe they did ſo.* But this objection alſo will be of no force, if we conſider *Four* things.

1. That this Objection allows the preſcribing of Forms to be lawful in its own nature; for otherwiſe God muſt have done that which is unlawful in its own nature. Nay our *Saviour*'s preſcribing his Form was a tacit approbation of other Forms, that were preſcrib'd before, and that not only by God, but by Men too. For the *Jews* us'd ſeveral Forms of human compoſure in their Temple and Synagogues in our *Saviour*'s time, yet he was ſo far from diſapproving them, that he preſcrib'd a Form to his own Diſciples; which Form, as Mr. *Gregory* has prov'd, he collected out of the *Jewiſh* Forms, in whoſe Books the ſeveral Parts and Clauſes of it are Extant almoſt *verbatim* to this day. And certainly had he diſapprov'd their Forms as evil and ſinful, he wou'd never have Collected his own Prayer out of them. Since therefore our *Saviour*'s giving a Form in ſuch circumſtances ſignifies his approbation of other Forms, 'tis plain

either that he approv'd what is evil, or that Forms are lawful.

2. That this Objection muſt allow the preſcribing of Public Forms to be not only lawful, but alſo uſeful. For otherwiſe God, who alwaies Acts for wiſe Ends, and Uſes the moſt proper means, wou'd never have preſcrib'd any Forms. And certainly what was once uſeful, is uſeful ſtill. For 1. we are now dull and carnal enough to need Forms; and 2. our *Saviour* has preſcrib'd one to be us'd in all Ages, which he wou'd not have done, had it not been uſeful for the Goſpel-ſtate.

3. That this Objection muſt alſo allow, that God's preſcribing Forms by Inſpir'd Perſons may be lawfully imitated by us, provided we have the ſame reaſon for it. And therefore Governours may preſcribe Forms as long as Forms are uſeful.

4. That tho' Governours may preſcribe Forms after God's Example, yet they may not preſcribe them as *Scripture*, or Divine Inſpiration. For as Spiritual Governours muſt take care to inſtruct the People after God's Example, but are not obliged to do it by Inſpir'd Perſons: ſo they may preſcribe Forms of Prayer after God's Example, but cannot pretend to do it by Inſpiration. They have God's Example for doing the Action; but they cannot pretend to Inſpiration in the doing of it without manifeſt falſhood and preſumtion. And therefore, tho' God's Example will warrant for the one; yet it will not warrant them falſly to pretend to the other. Thus then it appears, that ſome Forms of Prayer are commanded in *Holy Scripture*; and that our Governours are Authoriz'd by God's Example to preſcribe others, when they judge them uſeful.

II. Therefore, I am to prove, that tho' no Forms

Forms were preſcrib'd, yet Forms are as lawful as conceiv'd or *Extempore* Prayers. Certainly there is no command of God to pray *Extempore*; and therefore Forms have a better claim to Divine Authority, than they. 'Tis ſaid indeed, that whereſoever we are commanded to Pray Vocally, we are commanded to Pray in our own Conceptions and words; but this is a great miſtake. For certainly when God commanded Men to Pray by his own Forms, they did pray Vocally, tho' not in their own words. And here let me take notice, that *Diſſenters* appropriate the Name of *Prayer* to Praying in their own words; and call the uſing a Form (not *Prayer*, but) *Reading a Prayer*. But ſurely the *Levites* did really *Pray*, when they us'd the Words of *David* and *Aſaph*; and ſo did the Primitive *Chriſtians*, when they ſaid the Lord's Prayer; and if ſo, then a Form may be truly call'd a Vocal Prayer. For Vocal Prayer conſiſts in the ſpeaking of our devout affections to God whether with, or without a Form.

But they pretend, that whatſoever inſtances there may be of Forms in Old Times, God has declar'd in the *New Teſtament*, that it is his Will, we ſhou'd Pray by our own gift of utterance for the future. Now methinks, had it been the Will of God, that we ſhou'd not Pray by Forms, 'tis very ſtrange that in all the *New Teſtament* there ſhou'd be no expreſs prohibition of it. Eſpecially ſince I have prov'd that the *Jews* had Forms, and *Philo* de Victim. p. 483. and the Modern *Rabbins* own the ſame; they were alſo a People moſt tenacious of their cuſtoms, and therefore needed to be forbidden the uſe of Forms, had our Lord deſign'd to exclude them out of his Worſhip. Nay the *Eſſenes*, who of all the Sects of the *Jews*, did moſt readily embrace Chriſtianity, had cer-

tain Forms of Prayer, as *Joſephus* obſerves, *De Bell. Jud.* l. 2. c. 7. p. 783. Now when thoſe that were moſt likely to receive the Chriſtian Faith, were ſo addicted to Forms, can we imagine, that had *Chriſt* intended they ſhou'd uſe them no longer, he wou'd not have given them expreſs warning of them? But when inſtead of ſo doing, he bids them ſay, *Our Father*, &c. how cou'd they think, but that he deſign'd they ſhou'd ſtill uſe a Form, as they did before? Were not that his deſign, 'tis ſtrange, that he took no care to undeceive them.

But that I may fully prove, that the *Scripture* does not command us to Pray without a Form; I ſhall examine the reaſons for which the *Diſſenters* think it do's. God, ſay they, has promiſ'd us an ability to utter our minds in Vocal Prayer, and therefore to Pray by Forms of other Men's compoſure is contrary to his intention. But I ſhall afterwards prove, that this ability, which they pretend is promiſ'd for the purpoſe of Vocal Prayer, is a common gift, which God has no more appropriated to Prayer, than to any other end of utterance and elocution; and that therefore to omit the uſing it in Prayer, is no more contrary to the intention of God, than to omit the uſing it upon any other juſt and lawful occaſion. However, becauſe they urge ſome places of *Scripture* to prove, that 'tis deſign'd merely for Vocal Prayer, I ſhall therefore conſider them. 1. They urge *Zach.* 12. 10. *I will pour out upon the houſe of* David *and the inhabitants of* Jeruſalem, *the Spirit of grace and ſupplications.* The *Hebrew* word, tranſlated *ſupplications*, do's alwaies (ſay they) denote Vocal Prayer, and therefore pouring out the Spirit of ſupplications muſt imply communicating an ability to Pray Vocally. To this

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I anſwer, that the word is no more reſtrain'd to Vocal Prayer, than any other word that ſignifies *Prayer* in *Scripture*. 'Tis true we read, *Pſal.* 28.2. *Hear the voice of my ſupplication, when I cry unto thee*; but *the voice of my ſupplication* do's not neceſſarily denote Vocal Prayer. For 'tis a Hebraism, and may ſignify no more than *my Supplication* or Prayer. For ſo *Gen.* 4.10. 'tis ſaid, *The voice of thy Brother's blood cries*, &c. Now the blood had no real voice to cry with, but cry'd juſt as mental Prayer do's. In other places the word ſignifies both mental and vocal Prayer indifferently, *Pſal.* 86. 6. & 6. 9. or Prayer in general, *Jer.* 31.9. But ſuppoſe the word were alwaies us'd for Vocal Prayer, yet ſurely the Promiſe of *pouring out the Spirit of ſupplications* intends a much greater good than the gift of *extempore* utterance in Prayer, of which bad Men may have a greater ſhare than the moſt devout. And what is that greater good, but the gift of Heavenly affections in Prayer? If it be urg'd, that God *has ſent forth the Spirit of his Son, crying, Abba Father.* Gal. 4. 6. and that *we have receiv'd the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father,* Rom. 8. 15. and that theſe Texts prove us to be enabled to Pray Vocally by the Spirit, and that therefore we ought not to Pray by Forms; I anſwer, 1. That if theſe words oblige us to cry Vocally to God by our own gifts, then we are equally obliged in all our Vocal Prayers to cry to him in theſe words, *Abba Father*; becauſe that is the cry which the Spirit enables us to make, and the Text is every whit as expreſs for one as for the other. 2. I deny that *crying* here do's neceſſarily denote Vocal Prayer. For how often do we find the word apply'd to things that have no Voice at all? Thus the *ſtones wou'd immediately cry out*, Luke 19. 40.

and the Labourers hire is ſaid *to cry to* God, *James* 5. 4. And indeed *crying to* God has the ſame latitude with Prayer, which includes both Vocal and Mental. 3. Suppoſe that *crying, Abba Father*, by the Spirit, ſignifies Vocal Prayer; yet all that can be gather'd from it is only this, that when we Pray Vocally, we are enabled by the *Holy Spirit* to addreſs our ſelves to God with aſſurance, as to a merciful Father; and this we may as well do in a *Form* as otherwiſe. For if we never cry *Abba Father* by the ſpirit, but when we word our own Prayers, we can no more be ſaid to do it when we join with a public Extempore Prayer, than when we join with a public Form, becauſe we word our own Prayers in neither.

'Tis true, the *Scripture* ſpeaks of a gift *of utterance*, which, ſay they, was given for Praying as well as Preaching; but I anſwer, that the gift of utterance was miraculous and particular to the Primitive Ages. This gift, ſaies Saint *Chryſoſtom Hom.* 24. ad *Eph.* c. 6. is that which *Chriſt* promis'd, *Mark* 13. 11. by which the Diſciples ſpake without premeditation, and what they ſpake was the inſpir'd Word of God; and this Gift no ſober *Diſſenter* will pretend to. The *Apoſtles began to ſpeak with tongues, as the ſpirit gave them utterance*, Act. 2. 4. and the *Diſſenters* may as well pretend to the gift of Tongues, as that of Utterance, they being both extraordinary.

But ſay they, tho' all Men have not the Gift of Praying *Extempore*, yet ſome have; and therefore God requires ſuch to Pray by their gift and not by a Form. For he requires them *not to neglect the gift*, 1 Tim. 4. 14. but *to ſtir up the gift*, 2 Tim. 1. 6. and to *Miniſter the gift*, 1 Pet. 4. 10. and that *having gifts*, &c. Rom. 12. 6. and if Men are obliged

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to exerciſe their gifts in general, then they muſt exerciſe their gift of Praying *Extempore* in particular. Now to theſe things, I anſwer, *Firſt*, That the gift beſtow'd upon *Timothy* was the gift of Epiſcopal power, which he is exhorted to exerciſe diligently. For at the firſt plantation of the Goſpel, the *Holy Ghoſt* Pointed out the Men, that were to be Biſhops, as the (*f*) Fathers teſtifie. For this reaſon the gift is ſaid to be given him *by Propheſy*. 'Twas given alſo *with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery*; and theſe two circumſtances prove, that the gift was not *the gift of Propheſying*, but the gift of Epiſcopal Authority beſtow'd upon him by impoſition of hands at God's particular Appointment. And now I pray, how do's this Text prove, that we muſt uſe a gift of Vocal Prayer in our own words?

As for 1 *Pet.* 4. 10. *Rom.* 12. 6. I Anſwer, 1. That there can be nothing in them againſt Praying by a Form; for then they wou'd make as much againſt uſing the Lord's Prayer, as any other Form. 2. That the deſign of thoſe Texts is to ſtir Men up to diligence in the exerciſe of thoſe ſeveral Offices, *viz.* The Office of a Biſhop, a Prieſt, a Deacon, and a Rich Man. For 'tis plain that the word *Gift* do's oftentimes ſignifie an Office; and tho' it may be ſaid, that the relief of the Poor is rather the exerciſe of an Ability than an Office, yet I anſwer, that 'tis properly the exerciſe of an Office, becauſe the very having *Ability* do's as much put a Man into the *Office* of ſhewing mercy to the Poor, as if God had appointed him to it by a ſolemn Ordination. 3. Suppoſing that by theſe gifts were not meant Offices, but only abilities, yet

(*f*) *Clem.* 1 Epiſt. ad Corinth. *Chryſoſt.* in Act. 13. 2.

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we are obliged ſo to exerciſe them, *That all things may be done to Edification*; for ſo the Apoſtle declares that thoſe extraordinary Gifts, that were pour'd out in the Primitive Times, were to be us'd, 1 *Cor.* 14.2,6,19,40. as 'tis particularly plain by the inſtance of the Gift of Tongues, *verſ.* 23, 26, 28. Now if we are not to exerciſe our gifts, but as they tend to Edification, then we muſt not exerciſe the gift of Praying *Extempore* any farther than it tends to Edification. And ſince Praying by a Form in Public Worſhip do's (as I ſhall afterwards prove) tend more to Edification, than Praying *Extempore*; therefore 'tis plain that we ought to ſuſpend the uſe of the gift of conceiv'd Prayer. Thus, I hope, I have made it appear that ſome Forms of Prayer are commanded in *Scripture*, and that thoſe Texts which are urg'd againſt the uſe of forms of Prayer, do prove nothing againſt them; and therefore I think I may ſafely affirm, that the *Scripture* do's warrant Forms of Prayer.

I proceed now to ſhew that Antiquity do's the ſame. This I ſhall do, 1. by anſwering thoſe Authorities, which are objected by the *Diſſenters* againſt the uſe of Forms in the Primitive Ages. 2. By proving that they were us'd in thoſe Ages, by a ſhort Hiſtorical Account of the matter of Fact.

1. Then 'tis objected, *Firſt* that *Juſtin Martyr* ſaies, *Apol.* 2. p. 98. That the Miniſter at the Communion Pray'd, ὅση δύναμις αὐτῷ, that is, ſay they, *according to his ability*; from whence they infer, that in his daies the Miniſters Pray'd by their own gifts and abilities. To this I anſwer, that the words do ſignify *with all his might*, i. e. *with his utmoſt fervency*. For the ſame words are ſpoken of the People in the ſame Book, p. 60. who did not compoſe

poſe their own Prayer at the *Euchariſt*; and the ſame Phraſe is us'd in the ſame ſence by *Nazianzen, Orat.* 3. 2dly, Becauſe *Tertullian* in his *Apology* affirms, that Chriſtians did Pray *without a Monitor or Prompter, becauſe they did Pray from their hearts*; they think he alludes to a cuſtom of the Heathen, who in their public worſhip had a Monitor to direct them in what words and to what God they were to Pray. Now ſince the Chriſtians Pray'd without a Monitor, therefore ſay they, they Pray'd without any one to direct them what Form of words they were to pray in. To which I anſwer, 1. That *without a Monitor* cannot ſignify, without any one to dictate a Form of words. For in their public Prayers the Miniſter was the Mouth of the People; and therefore whether he Pray'd by *Form* or *extempore*, his words were a Form to the People. Whatever therefore this obſcure Phraſe means, 'tis certain it cannot mean without a Form, unleſs it means without a Miniſter too. 2. It ſeems to me moſt probable, that by *without a Monitor* is meant, without any one to correct them, when either the People repeated or the Miniſter recited the public Prayers falſly. For (*g*) the Heathen Prieſts began their Sacrifices with a Form of Prayer, which began with an Invocation of *Janus* and *Veſta*, and proceeded with the invocations of all the greater Deities by name. Now that none of the greater God's might be pretermitted, and (*h*) none of the Prayers falſly or diſorderly recited or repeated, (*i*) one Prieſt read out of a Ritual, and another was appointed for a Public Monitor, to overſee and correct ſuch miſtakes as

(*g*) *A. Gell.* Noct. Att. l. 13. c. 21. *Roſin.* Antiq. l. 3. c. 33.
(*h*) *Plin.* l. 28. c. 2. (*i*) *Liv.* l. 4.

might

might be made. When therefore *Tertullian* ſaies, *We Pray without a Monitor*, his meaning is not, that we Pray without a Prieſt to dictate our Prayers to us, whether out of a Book or *Extempore*; but that we Pray without one to overſee, to admoniſh the Prieſts or People, when they dictate or repeat falſly. *Becauſe*, ſaies he, *we Pray from our hearts*; that is, either by joining our affections and deſires with the Prieſt without repeating the words, or by ſaying our Prayers by heart; ſo that we need none to correct us. For *Tertullian* affects to expreſs the Greek; and therefore 'tis probable his *de pectore*, or *from the heart* may be a tranſlation of ἀπομνημονίζειν, which ſignifies to *ſay by heart*. So that *Tertullian*'s words do rather argue for the uſe of Forms, than againſt them. The *Third* and laſt teſtimony againſt the Antiquity of Forms of Prayer, is that of *Socrates Scholaſticus*, whoſe words, *Hiſt.* lib. 5. c. 22. they thus tranſlate; *Every where and in all worſhips of Prayer, there are not two to be found, that ſpeak the ſame words.* And therefore, ſay they, 'tis very unlikely, they ſhou'd Pray by Forms. But we muſt obſerve, that he had been ſpeaking of the different ceremonies and cuſtoms of the chief Churches; and then concludes, *Every where and among all worſhips of Prayer, there are not two to be found,* (not *that ſpeak the ſame words*) but *that agree* ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ, *in the ſame thing*. Where by *worſhips of Prayer* he means rites of Prayer, which the Churches differ'd in. And how do's it follow, that becauſe they did not uſe the ſame rites and ceremonies of Prayer, therefore they did not uſe Forms of Prayer? For even now we ſee there are different rites and ceremonies of Prayer among thoſe Churches, which do yet agree in uſing Forms of Prayer.

Secondly,

2. Therefore I am to prove, that Forms were us'd in the Primitive times, by a ſhort Hiſtorical account of the matter of fact. 'Tis probable, that in the firſt Age there was a gift of Praying *Extempore* by immediate inſpiration; and while this gift continu'd, perhaps there might be no other Form in public Worſhip, but only that of the Lord's Prayer. But 'tis probable, that upon the ceaſing or abatement of it, Forms were compos'd after the method of thoſe inſpir'd Prayers. For 'tis moſt likely, that even from the Apoſtolical Age ſome part at leaſt of the public Worſhip was perform'd in Forms of Prayer; becauſe, ſo far as we can find, there never was any diſpute among Chriſtians concerning the lawfulneſs of Praying by a Form. For 'tis ſtrange that, if Forms were an innovation, ſuch a remarkable and public innovation ſhou'd be introduc'd without the leaſt conteſt or oppoſition. For tho' ſome innovations did creep in; yet every one of that public nature alwaies found powerful adverſaries to withſtand it.

But not to inſiſt upon probabilities, wee'l enquire into matter of fact. The Liturgies of Saint *Peter*, St. *Mark* and St. *James*, tho' corrupted by latter Ages, yet are doubtleſs of great antiquity, and probably even from the Apoſtles times. For beſides many things, which have a ſtrong reliſh of that Age, that of St. *James* was of great authority in the Church of *Jeruſalem* in St. *Cyril*'s time, who wrote a Comment upon it even in his younger years; and 'tis declar'd by (*k*) *Proclus*, and the (*l*) *Sixth* general Council to be of St. *James*'s own Compoſure; and 'twas probably receiv'd in the Church of *Jeruſalem* within 170 years after the

(*k*) *Allat.* de Lit. Sti. Jac. (*l*) Concil. Trull. c. 32.

Apo-

Apoſtolical Age. And that there are Forms of Worſhip in it as ancient as the Apoſtles, ſeems highly probable; For *Firſt*, all the Form *Surſum corda* is there, and in St. *Cyril*'s Comment; and the ſame is in the Liturgies of *Rome* and *Alexandria* and the Conſtitutions of *Clemens*, which all agree are of great antiquity; and St. *Cyprian*, who was living within an 100 years after the Apoſtles, (*m*) mentions it as a Form then us'd and receiv'd; and St. *Auſtin* tells us, that Form is *words deriv'd from the very age of the Apoſtles.* The ſame is aſſerted by *Nicephorus* of the *Triſagium* in particular, *Hiſt.* lib. 18. c. 53. 'Tis evident, that from that Primitive Age there was a Form of queſtions and anſwers preſcrib'd in Baptiſm, from the queſtions and anſwers, which *Tertull.* De Reſur. Carn. St. *Cypr.* 76. 80. *Origen* in Numer. Hom. 5. ſpeak of. And if the Miniſter may be limited to a Form of queſtion, why not to a Form of Prayer, there being as great a neceſſity to preſcribe for the latter as for the former?

But that *de facto* there were Forms of Prayer, as well as Queſtions and Anſwers us'd in Baptiſm, *Clemens*'s Conſtitutions affirm; and ſome of the Prayers are there inſerted, *l.* 7. And that Chriſtians did very early uſe Forms of Prayer in their public Worſhip, is evident from the Names given to public Prayers; for they are call'd the (*n*) *Common-Prayer*, (*o*) *Conſtituted Prayers* and (*p*) *Solemn Prayers*; which laſt was the Title by which the Heathens diſtinguiſht their (*q*) pub-

(*m*) *De Orat. Dom.* (*n*) *Juſtin.* Apol. 2. *Ignat.* Epiſt. ad Magn. (*o*) *Orig.* cont. Celſ. l. 6. (*p*) *Cypr.* de Lapſ. ſerm. 14. (*q*) Vid. *Ovid.* de faſt. lib. 6. *Stat.* lib 4. *Senec.* in Oedip. act. 2. ſcen. 2.

lic

lic Forms of Prayer, and conſequently in the Language of that Age muſt ſignifie a public Form. (*r*) St. *Baſil* fetches the *Glory be to the Father*,&c. from the tradition of the Apoſtles, and cites it from St. *Clemens* the Apoſtles Scholar, and from *Dionyſius* of *Alexandria*, who was living in the year 200; and *Clemens* of *Alexandria*, who was living in the year 160, ſets down theſe words as the Chriſtian Form of Praiſing God, (*ſ*) *Praiſing the Father and the Son with the Holy Ghoſt.* So that this Form is older than the time of the *Arians*; for they are ſharply (*t*) reprov'd by the Orthodox Fathers for the alteration of it. And indeed a great part of the Primitive Worſhip conſiſted of Hymns, which muſt neceſſarily be compos'd into ſet Forms. *Tertull.* Apol. cap. 2. and before him *Lucian* in Philop. and *Juſtin Martyr* alſo, Epiſt. ad *Zen.* & *Heren.* ſpeak of their ſinging ſuch Hymns. *They ſpend whole nights in watching and ſinging of Pſalms,* ſaies *Lucian*; and *Pliny* ſaies, that *early in the Morning 'twas their manner to ſing by turns a Hymn to Chriſt as* God; which *Hymn* was doubtleſs of human compoſure, there being no Hymn to Chriſt in *Scripture* of that length, as to take up a conſiderable part of their public Service. *Euſebius* tells us, that very early there were various Pſalms and Odes compos'd by Chriſtians concerning the Divinity of Chriſt (*u*); and that *Paulus Samoſatenus* was condemn'd for ſuppreſſing thoſe Hymns that were made in the Honour of Chriſt, *as being the compoſition of Men of late daies* (*w*); tho' in all probability thoſe Hymns were compos'd within much

(*r*) De Spir. S. c. 27. & 29. (*ſ*) Pædag. (*t*) *Theod.* Hiſt. l. 2. c. 24. (*u*) *Euſeb.* Hiſt. lib. 5. (*w*) ibid. Hiſt. lib. 7.

leſs than an hundred years after the Apoſtolical Age. But as for this Hymn which *Pliny* ſpeaks of, it was earlier, for it cou'd not be much above ten years after the death of St. *John*, that *Pliny* gave this account of the Chriſtians to *Trajan*; and therefore to be ſure the Hymn he there ſpeaks of, was us'd in the Age of the Apoſtles. About the ſame time, *Lucian* makes mention of a Prayer which they us'd in their public Worſhip, ἀπὸ πατρὸς ἀρξάμενοι, *beginning from the Father*; which doubtleſs was the Lord's Prayer: *and of a famous Hymn added to the end of their Service*, (x) which in all probability was the Hymn that *Pliny* ſpeaks of. Since therefore the Primitive Worſhip, did in a great meaſure conſiſt of Hymns, which were Forms of Praiſe intermixt with Prayer, and ſome of theſe of human compoſure; this is an evident Teſtimony of the Primitive uſe of Forms. And doubtleſs, they who made no ſcruple of praying by Form in verſe, cou'd not but think it lawful to pray by Form in proſe. Now that Praying in Meeter or compos'd Hymns was a very early practice in the Chriſtian Church, is evident from the Apoſtolical Conſtitutions, where it is injoin'd, *Let the People ſing the verſes which anſwer adverſly to one another* (y): which way of ſinging was ſo very ancient, that *Euſebius* (z) urges it as an Argument to prove the *Eſſenes* Chriſtians, becauſe they ſung by turns, anſwering one another; and how cou'd they thus anſwer to one another in their Hymns and Prayers, unleſs they had conſtant Forms of Prayer? But that they had ſuch Reſponſals in Prayer, is evident, becauſe, when *Julian* for the credit of *Gentiliſm* wou'd needs dreſs it up,

(x) *Lucian.* Philop. (y) Conſtitut. Apoſt. l. 2. cap. 5.
(z) *Euſeb.* Hiſt. Eccleſ. l. 2. c. 171.

(a) after

(*a*) *after the Order of the Chriſtian Worſhip*; one thing wherein he ſought to imitate it was in their conſtituted Prayers; that is, not in having conſtituted Forms of Prayer, for that the Heathen had before; but in having ſuch conſtituted Forms as the Chriſtians had; that is, as *Nazianzen* (*b*) explains it, *a Form of Prayer to be ſaid in parts*; for this way of Praying in parts *Nicephorus* (*c*) derives from *Ignatius*, who was a Scholar of the Apoſtles. All which to me is a plain demonſtration of the great Antiquity of Forms. And that in *Conſtantine*'s time, the Church us'd public Forms of Prayer, is evident from that often-cited place of *Euſebius*, (*d*) where he tells us of *Conſtantine*'s compoſing *Godly Prayers for the uſe of his Soldiers*; and elſewhere tells us in particular what the Prayer was; *We acknowledge thee, O God, alone*, &c. (*e*) which is a plain evidence that it was a ſet Form of words. But it's objected that this Form was compos'd only for the uſe of his Soldiers, who were a great part of them Heathens; and that *Conſtantine*'s compoſing it, is a plain evidence, that at that time there were no public Forms in the Church; for if there had, what need *Conſtantine* have compos'd one? To which I anſwer, That this Form indeed was compos'd only for his Heathen Soldiers; for as for his Chriſtian Soldiers, the ſtory tells us, that he gave them liberty to go to Church (*f*). And therefore all that can be gather'd hence is, that the Chriſtian Church had no Form of Prayers for Heathen Soldiers, which is no great wonder; for if they had, it's very unlikely

(*a*) *Soz.* Hiſt. l. 5. c. 15. (*b*) *Nazian.* Orat. 1. p. 102. (*c*) *Nicepb.* l. 13. c. 8. (*d*) *Euſeb.* de Laud. *Conſtant.* (*e*) Id. de vit. *Conſtant.* c. 20. (*f*) Ibid. c. 19.

that the Heathen Soldiers wou'd have us'd it. But that they had Forms is evident, becauſe he calls the Prayers which *Conſtantine* us'd in his Court, *according to the manner of the Church of* God, (*g*) *Authoriz'd Prayers*; which is the ſame Title which he (*h*) gave to that Form which he made for his Heathen Soldiers. And therefore if by the *Authoriz'd Prayers* which he preſcrib'd to his Soldiers, he meant a Form of Prayers, as 'tis evident he did: then by the *Authoriz'd Prayers* which he us'd in his Court *after the manner of the Church*, he muſt mean a Form of Prayer alſo. And ſince he had a Form of Prayer in his Court *after the manner of the Church*, the Church muſt have a Form of Prayers too.

'Tis plain then, that the three firſt Centuries had public Forms of Prayer; after which (not to inſiſt upon the Liturgies of St. *Baſil*, St. *Chryſoſtom* and St. *Ambroſe*) we have undeniable teſtimonies of the ſame. *See* St. *Chryſoſt.* 2. ad Corinth. Homil. 18. St. *Auſtin* de Bapt. cont. *Donat.* lib. 6. and Concil. Carth. 3. *c.* 12. Concil. Milev. c. 12. *Juſtin.* Novel. 137. *Pref.* & 1, 2, 6. *Nazian.* Orat. in *Baſil* 20. ſaies, St. *Baſil* compos'd Orders and Forms of Prayer: and St. *Baſil* himſelf, *Epiſt.* 63. reciting the Manner of the public Service, that was us'd in the Monaſtical Oratories of his Inſtitution, ſaies, that nothing was done therein, but what was conſonant and agreeable to all the Churches of God. Nay the Council of *Laodicea*, holden about the Year 364, expreſly provides, That *the ſame Liturgy*, or *Form of Prayers*, ſhou'd be alwaies us'd both Morning and Evening, Can. 18. and this Canon is taken into the Collection of the Canons of the Catholic Church; which Collection was eſtabliſh'd in the General

(*g*) Ibid. c. 17. (*h*) Ibid. c. 18.

Council

Council of *Chalcedon*, in the Year 451, by which eſtabliſhment the whole Chriſtian Church was obliged to the uſe of Liturgies, ſo far as the Authority of the General Council extends. And then in the Year 541, theſe Canons were made Imperial Laws by *Juſtinian*, Novel. 131. c. 1. *See Zonar.* and *Balſam.* on *can.* 18. *See* alſo *Smectym.* Anſw. to the *Remonſt.* p. 7. *Grand. deb.* p. 11. and *Concil. Laod.* c. 15, 19. Thus for near 600 Years after *Chriſt* we have ſufficient teſtimony of the public uſe of Forms of Prayer.

And from henceforth, or a little after, down to Mr. *Calvin*'s time, all are agreed, that no Prayers but eſtabliſh'd Liturgies were us'd. Nay *Calvin*, who Pray'd *Extempore* after his Lecture, alwaies us'd a Form before, *Pref. ad* Calv. *Præl. in Min. Proph.* and he compos'd a Form for the Sunday-Service, which was afterwards eſtabliſh'd at *Geneva*. Nay he ſaies, *for as much as concerns the Forms of Prayer, and Eccleſiaſtical Rites, I highly approve that it be determin'd ſo, as that it may not be lawful for the Miniſters in their adminiſtration to vary from it*; *Ep.* 87. Nor is there any one Reform'd Church, but what has ſome public Form of Prayer; nor was the lawfulneſs of Forms ever call'd in queſtion before. Nay Mr. *Ball*, Dr. *Owen*, Mr. *Baxter*, Mr. *Norton* and Mr. *Tombes* do (*i*) expreſly own them to be lawful; and *this is* ſaid (*k*) to be *the tenent of all our* (Diſſenting) *beſt, and moſt judicious Divines. It is very well known* (ſaies (*l*) one)

(*i*) See *Ball*'s *Trial*, Pref. & c. 1, 2, 3, 8. *Baxter*'s Cure of Ch. Diviſ. p. 175. *Owen*'s Work of the Spirit in Prayer, p. 220, 222, 235. *Norton*'s Anſwer to *Apollon.* c. 13. (*k*) *Clark*'s Lives of 10 Divines, p. 255. (*l*) *Bradſhaw*'s Life in *Clark*'s Coll. in fol. p. 67.

that the flower of our own Divines went on in this way, when they might have done otherwiſe, if they had pleas'd, in their Prayers before Sermons; and we find Mr. *Hilderſham*'s Prayer before Sermon *(m)* Printed. This was ſo univerſally and conſtantly practis'd, that Mr. *Clark (n)* tells us, that *the firſt Man who brought conceiv'd Prayer into uſe in thoſe parts where he liv'd, was* Mr. *Sam. Cook*, who died but in the Year 1649. Nay the chief *Diſſenting* writers do not only aſſert, but they alſo undertake to prove the lawfulneſs of Forms *(o)* from the nature, uſe and ends of Prayer; and charge the contrary opinion with Enthuſiaſm *(p)* and Novelty *(q)*. They grant alſo, 1. That Forms are not only lawful, but that there are Footſteps of this way of Worſhip both in the Old and New Teſtament, as Mr. *Tombes* and others have ſhew'd, *(r)* and Mr. *Ainſworth* (that did otherwiſe argue againſt them) do's confeſs *(ſ)*. 2. That they are very ancient in the Chriſtian Church. The *Chriſtian Churches* of ancient Times, for the ſpace of this 1400 Years at leaſt, if not from the Apoſtles Time, had their ſtinted Liturgies, ſaith Mr. *Ball (t)*: and *(u)* they anſwer Objections to the contrary. 3. That in the beſt reform'd, nay, in all reform'd Churches, they are not only us'd and tolerated, but alſo *(w)* uſeful

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(m) See His Doctrine of Faſting and Prayer, *Anno* 1633. *(n)* Collect. of 10 Lives, *4to*, p. 38. *(o)* See *Ball*'s Tri l.c. 2. *Rogers*'s Tr. 223. *Bryan*'s Dwelling with God, p. 307. *Egerton*'s Practice of Chriſtianity, c. 11. p. 691. Edit. 5. *(p) Grave Conſut.* Epiſt. to the Reader. Contin. Morn. Exerc. p. 1006. *(q) Prieſt*, Serm. on *Joh.* 1. 16. *(r)* Theodulia, p. 221. *Baxt.* Cure, p. 176. *Ball*'s Tryal. p. 128, 129. *Grave conſut.* p. 12, 13. *(ſ)* Annot. on *Ex.* 12. 8. *(t)* Tryal, p. 96, 106, 111, 138. & p. 80. *(u) Tombes*'s Theodulia, p. 222. *(w) Ball*'s Tryal, p. 108, &c. *Rogers*'s Treatiſes, p. 224. *Tombes*'s Theod. p. 234.

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and expedient. 4. That those amongst us, to whom the use of the Common-Prayer has been most burthensome, *have from time to time, profest their liking and approbation of a stinted Liturgy*, as Mr. *Ball* assures us *(x)*. That they thought it altogether unlawful to separate from Churches for the sake of stinted Forms and Liturgies, is not only frequently affirm'd by Mr. *Ball (y)*, but little less even by Mr. *Norton*, *(z)* who saies, *It is lawful to embrace Communion with Churches, where such Forms in public Worship are in use; neither do's it lie as a Duty on a Believer, that he disjoin and separate himself from such a Church.* And they give this reason for it, that then they must separate from all Churches. So Mr. *Baxter (a)*, *Is it not a high degree of Pride, to conclude, that almost all* Christ's Churches *in the World, for these* 13 *hundred Years at least to this day, have offer'd such worship unto God, as that you are obliged to avoid it? And that almost all the* Catholic Church *on Earth this day, is below your Communion for using Forms? And that even* Calvin, *and the Presbyterians,* Cartwright, Hildersham, *and the Old Non-Conformists were unworthy your Communion?*

As for Praying *Extempore*, 'twas set up in *England* in opposition to our *Liturgy*. For in the Ninth Year of Q. *Eliz.* to seduce the People from the Church, and to serve the ends of Popery, one Friar *Comin* began to Pray *Extempore* with such fervor, that he deluded many, and was amply rewarded for it by the *Pope*. See *Foxes* and *Firebrands*, p. 7, &c. After him *Tho. Heath* did the same, p.

(x) Tryal, p. 96, 106, 12. (y) Resp. ad Apol. c. 13. (z) Sacril. desert. p. 102. (a) Defence, part 2. p. 65. See *Ball*'s Tryal, p. 131. *Rogers*'s Tr. p. 224.

17. See alſo *Unreaſon. of ſep.* pref. p. 11, &c. And I hope when the *Diſſenters* have well conſider'd, whom they join with, and whoſe cauſe they advance, by decrying our Liturgy and extolling *Extempore* Prayers, they will ſee cauſe to think better of Forms of Prayer.

Secondly, I am now to anſwer the *Diſſenters* Objections againſt Forms of Prayer.

1. They pretend, that the Uſe of public Forms do's deaden the Devotion of Prayer; whereas I doubt not to make it appear, that they do quicken Devotion much more then *Extempore* Prayers.

'Tis plain that Forms of Prayer do fix the *Miniſter*'s attention more than *Extempore* Prayers. For his matter and words being ready before him, he has nothing elſe to do but to attend his inward Devotion, which is the life of Prayer: whereas Praying *Extempore* forces him to attend to the Recollection of Matter, and invention of expreſſions; which muſt more or leſs divert him, it being impoſſible to attend to ſeveral things, as cloſely as he may to one. 'Tis true, he that uſes a Form, may permit his thoughts to wander; but then the fault is in the Man, and not in the Form; for he converts that which in it ſelf helps Devotion, into an occaſion of indevotion. He that Praies *Extempore* is more bound to attend to words; but he that Praies by Form, has better opportunities of attending to the proper buſineſs of Prayer, *viz.* Contrition, Senſe of our Wants and dependence upon God, &c. And by being an example of theſe in his Prayer, the Miniſter do's very much excite the Devotion of the People.

But 'tis Objected, that while his thoughts are imploy'd in inventing the matter and words of his Prayer, they are well imploy'd; becauſe they

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are attending to the duty of Prayer, tho' they be not ſo fixt upon the inward Devotion of it, as they might be in the uſe of a Form. To this I anſwer, that to invent the matter and words of Prayer, is not to Pray, but to ſtudy a Prayer, which cannot be prov'd to be a part of our duty. But we believe, that when we Pray Devoutly by a Form, we diſcharge the *whole* duty of Prayer, tho' we do not invent the matter and words our ſelves; and till we ſee the contrary prov'd, we ſhall always think ſo. If it be ſaid, that Praying *Extempore* will not ſuffer the Miniſter's thoughts to wander; I anſwer, that if the Miniſter have Devout affections, they will keep his thoughts from wandring, when he Praies by Form, as much as when he Praies *Extempore*; but if he has not, he cannot utter his words from his affections either way.

But 'tis pretended, that Praying *Extempore* do's heighten the Miniſter's affections more than a Form. Becauſe, ſay they, in reading a Form his affections follow his words, and are rais'd and excited by them; whereas in Praying *Extempore* his words follow his affections. But why may not a Man, who knows before hand what he is to Pray for, be Devoutly affected with it, before he expreſſes it in a Form, as well as before he expreſſes it *Extempore?* And why may not he that Praies *Extempore*, be as little affected with what he Praies for, before he has expreſt it, as he that uſes a Form? May not a Man's tongue run before his heart either way? But ſuppoſe it true, that in *Extempore* Prayer the words follow the affections, and that in a Form the affections follow the words; do's it follow that Praying *Extempore* heightens the affections more than a

Form? Why may not the affections, *viz. deſire*, &c. which follow the words, be as great as thoſe that go before? Eſpecially ſince our *Diſſenters* ſay, that expreſſive words do naturally quicken affections.

If it be ſaid, that the Miniſter cannot ſo well expreſs his Devout affections in other Mens words, as in his own; I anſwer, that he is the Mouth of the Congregation, and that his buſineſs is, not to expreſs his own particular and extraordinary fervours, as the common caſe of the Congregation; but ſo to ſpeak, as every honeſt and ordinary Chriſtian may join with him. For 'tis as bad for him to expreſs ſuch heights of Devotion, as few or none of them are arriv'd to; as to confeſs in their names ſuch ſins, as few or none of them are guilty of. Now the common ſenſe of the Congregation may be as well expreſs'd in another Man's words as in his own; unleſs we ſuppoſe that *Extempore* words can more fitly expreſs it, than thoſe that are premeditated; which no ſober *Diſſenter* will affirm. But, ſay they, the Miniſter's Soul is ſo buſied in reading a Form, that it cannot be ſo much affected, as when he Praies *Extempore*. Now I leave the Reader to judge, whether being buſied about the Matter, Method and Expreſſions of Prayer, do's not much more imploy the Miniſters Soul, than bare reading; that is, whether he that can read a Prayer without the leaſt trouble, cannot read a Prayer more eaſily than invent one.

However, they tell us, that Praying always in the ſame words, do's cloy the Attention of the *People*; whereas the newneſs and variety of conceiv'd Prayers do's naturally awaken their Minds and keep them more fixt and intent. But

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I anſwer, that the matter of public Prayer is, and for the main will be, the ſame; and therefore if the matter fixt their minds, 'twou'd as well do it in the ſame, as in new expreſſions. But if it be the Phraſe, that their minds are fixt on, there is nothing in it, but an amuſement of their fancies, which do's rather unfix them from the inward acts of Prayer, and diſtract their Devotion. Forms may be compos'd and pronounced as affectionately as *Extempore* Prayers, and may as well excite the People's Devotion; but novelty of method and expreſſion do's as much deaden the Devotion of thoſe that are fixt upon it, as worldly buſineſs. That ſeeming Devotion, that is rais'd by the jingling of words, is not Devotion but Mechaniſm; for a Man may be ſtrangely affected with the words of Prayer, who has not the leaſt ſpark of true Devotion to the matter of it: but if the Mind do's affect the matter of Prayer for it ſelf, and not for the ſake of the words, I cannot imagin, how new words ſhou'd any way advantage its Devotion, unleſs they were to expreſs new matter.

Thus it appears, that even what is urg'd in behalf of *Extempore* Prayers, do's plead much more for Forms; but then there are ſundry advantages peculiar to Forms, which *Extempore* Prayers cannot pretend to. For 1. People may conſider the matter of a Form, and endeavour to affect their minds with it before hand; and ſo they may Pray with greater preparation. 2. People may join in a Form with more underſtanding, than in an *Extempore* Prayer, wherein the Miniſter is forced to uſe ſuch expreſſions as come firſt to hand; and ſometimes he is forced to uſe a hard word, which half of the Congregation do not know, becauſe

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an eaſier do's not come to his mind; beſides many other inconveniencies, which 'tis impoſſible alwaies to avoid. Now in compoſing public Forms more care will be taken that the words may be intelligible, than there can be in *Extempore* Prayer. And truly, if the words be not intelligible, the People's Prayer muſt be as much interrupted as if the Miniſter ſpake in an unknown tongue. 3. Men may join in a Form with much more Faith, and Hope of being heard, than they can in *Extempore* Prayer. For they may be ſatisfied before hand, that the matter of a Form is good; but they cannot be ſo ſatisfied of an *Extempore* Prayer; conſidering that the Miniſter is many times a ſtranger, and may be perhaps Erroneous, Raſh, Ignorant, *&c.* And even thoſe Miniſters whom they know, may ſometimes miſtake their Paſſion for their Zeal, and reake their Anger or their Faction in their Prayers, or let drop an Errour, before they are aware, or expreſs themſelves ſo, as an honeſt mind may not be able to join. So that in joining with an *Extempore* Prayer a Man muſt judge what is ſaid, before he can conſent to it: and if he meet with a rub, the Miniſter goes on in the mean time, and the Man is left behind at a loſs, and perhaps confounded, before he can join again; and no ſooner perhaps is he well fixt, but he is troubled again with the ſame inconveniency: all which is eaſily prevented by the uſe of Forms. 4. Forms do not divert the affections of the People from the Matter of Prayer, as *Extempore* Prayers do, which diſturb Devotion, whenever the Miniſter heſitates, or blunders, or expreſſes himſelf improperly; for then ſome will be pitying, others contemning, others carping, *&c.* And if he perform well, ſome will admire

mire his Phraſe, Judgment, Readineſs, *&c.* all which things do call off their minds from the Matter. 5. The Decency and ſolemnity of public Worſhip, which things are highly advantageous to the Devotion of the people are better ſecur'd by Forms, than by *Extempore* Prayers, where they depend wholly upon the Miniſter. For if he happens to be a Man of a bad memory, or apt to blunder, or be dull, *&c.* then the Devotion of the Congregation may be turn'd into ſcorn and laughter; and of this I have ſeen too many ſad experiments. But ſuppoſe him to be an able and Pious perſon, yet he may be liable to indiſpoſitions of body, dulneſs, inadvertency, *&c.* with outward cares and accidents; and if he be, he muſt many times Pray confuſedly, or with broken, indecent expreſſions, and omit a great deal of the matter. Sometimes he will be at a loſs, and be forced to uſe fulſome repetitions; and how is it poſſible almoſt, but that a great deal of flat and empty nonſence, undigeſted conceptions and unadvis'd expreſſions ſhou'd eſcape from his lips, before he is aware? And this, if he has a grain of modeſty, muſt put him into greater confuſion, and ſo amaze him, that he will be hardly able to recover himſelf. Now is it not a hard caſe that the Devotions of Five hundred or a thouſand Perſons muſt be diſturb'd by one Man's diſorders? For they muſt either Pray after him, or not Pray at all. But all theſe evils are prevented by ſet public Forms. 6. Thoſe that join in a Form, may be better ſecur'd of the reality and ſincerity of their own Devotion. For they knowing before-hand the expreſſions of the Form, are not ſo much ſurpriz'd with the Phraſes; and therefore, if they find themſelves affected, may more ſafely conclude,

clude, 'tis the Matter and not the words, that moves them. Whereas a Man that is tickled with the words of an *Extempore* Prayer may fancy himſelf to be very devout, when he has nothing of true Devotion in him. I might add more; but I think theſe things are enough to convince an unprejudiced perſon, that Forms of Prayer are ſo far from hindring, that they very much help Devotion.

But if any Man ſhall ſtill object, that he finds by experience, that Forms do actually deaden his Devotions; becauſe his affections are flat and heavy, when he uſes them, but he is almoſt tranſported when he hears a Man Pray *Extempore*; I beſeech him to conſider, whether his experience be not founded in prejudice, and whether his prejudice ought to preſcribe to the whole Church. 'Tis certain, other Men find by experience, that joining with a Form do's help their Devotion; ſo that here is experience againſt experience. Now ſince two contrary experiences cannot proceed from the nature of the thing, therefore one muſt proceed from the temper of the Man. Now I have prov'd, and many Men find by experience, that Forms do help Devotion; and therefore if he do's not find the ſame, the fault muſt be in himſelf; and I doubt not, but if he will conſider the matter impartially, he will ſoon be of the ſame opinion. For we have *Scripture* and Reaſon on our ſide; but he is led by his paſſions, which may be charm'd and flatter'd, and will betray him into ſtrong deluſions. 'Tis plain, 'tis not the matter of the *Extempore* Prayer, that affects him; for that is the ſame as in a Form: and if he be taken with the chiming of words, 'tis but a ſenſitive delight; and he

he muſt not make a Diviſion in the Church, only to gratifie his fancy. Beſides, I deſire him ſtrictly to examine his Conſcience, whether he has not often been as dull at a conceiv'd Prayer, as at the public Forms. If ſo, then the perſon is to be blam'd, and not the Form; and he is guilty of a double iniquity, who divides the Church without ſufficient cauſe, and charges his own formality upon a good and wholeſome conſtitution.

2. They pretend, that *Praying in a Form of Words do's ſtint and limit the Spirit of Prayer.* But before I anſwer this Objection, it will be neceſſary to explain, 1. What it is that the *Scripture* attributes to the Spirit in Prayer. 2. What is meant by ſtinting or limiting the Spirit in Prayer.

Firſt Then, what is it that the *Scripture* attributes to the Spirit in Prayer? I anſwer, There are ſome things attributed to him, which were Extraordinary and Temporary; and others that were Ordinary, fixt and ſtanding. The Extraordinary and Temporary were the immediate Inſpiration of the matter of Prayer, and an ability to expreſs it in known or unknown Languages. We read in the Old Teſtament of Prayers and Praiſes, which for the matter of them, were immediately inſpir'd. Thus Pray'd *Hannah*, who, as the *Targum* paraphraſes it, *Pray'd by the Spirit of Propheſy*, that is, by immediate Inſpiration. For Praying and Praiſing by immediate Inſpiration are frequently call'd Propheſying; 1 *Sam.* 10. 5. *Numb.* 11. 25. 1 *Chron.* 25. 1. *Luc.* 1. 67. for the matter of all thoſe Prayers and Praiſes, together with thoſe in the Book of *Pſalms*, and ſundry others recorded in *Scripture*, was immediately

diately dictated by the *Holy Ghoſt*. But after the deſcent of the *Holy Ghoſt* at *Pentecoſt*, wherein the gift of Tongues was communicated, 'tis certain, that not only the matter, but the very Language of their Prayers was immediately Inſpir'd. This gift was peculiar to the Primitive Ages of Chriſtianity; becauſe the deſign of it was, not only to enable the firſt planters of the Goſpel to perform their office in the Languages of the ſeveral Nations they were ſent to, but alſo to be a ſign from God, as other Miracles were, for the confirmation of the Goſpel. *Tongues were for a ſign——to them that believe not*, 1 Cor. 14. 22. and therefore ſince all Miracles were Extraordinary, and after a time to ceaſe, certainly this Miraculous gift of Prayer was ſo too.

However, becauſe many *Diſſenters* think it (not an extraordinary, but) a *Standing* Gift, which the Spirit will communicate to all ſucceſſive Ages of the World; I deſire them to conſider, 1. That there is no promiſe of ſuch a gift by vertue of the New Covenant, and therefore no reaſon to expect the continuance of it; and 'tis preſumtion to promiſe our ſelves, what God has not promis'd us. For as for the *Spirit of Supplications*, *Zac.* 12. 10. 'tis plain, that 'tis the ſame with the *Spirit of Grace*, or of inward Piety and devotion. But that there is no ſuch Promiſe in the New Covenant, is evident from what is acknowledg'd on all hands; *viz.* That there are many good Chriſtians, who cou'd never pretend to any ſuch Inſpiration. For all good Chriſtians have a Right to the bleſſings of the New Covenant; and I am very confident, 'twou'd be look'd upon by all ſober *Diſſenters*, as a very raſh and unjuſt cenſure, to affirm, that *a Man cannot be a good*

good Chriſtian, who do's not Pray by immediate Inſpiration, but is alwaies fain to depend either on his own invention, or a Form. 2. That as there is no Promiſe, ſo there is no need of any ſuch immediate Inſpiration. 'Tis true, the Spirit will aſſiſt us in all neceſſary things, wherein our duty and Spiritual Life are concern'd; but 'tis an unwarrantable preſumtion to expect an immediate Inſpiration in Prayer, becauſe there is no neceſſity of it. For, 1. As for the Matter of our Prayers, the *Holy Spirit* has already ſufficiently reveal'd it to us in the Goſpel, and as plainly inſtructed us what we are to pray for, as he can be ſuppos'd to do by any immediate Inſpiration. And therefore, to ſuppoſe after all, a neceſſity of immediate Inſpiration, is in effect to ſuppoſe, that We have neither reaſon enough to underſtand the ſenſe of plain Words, nor memory enough to retain it. But, ſay the *Diſſenters, We know not what to Pray for as we ought, but the Spirit it ſelf maketh interceſſion for us with groanings which cannot be uttered,* Rom. 8. 26. and therefore we cannot in all caſes know the Matter of our Prayers without immediate Inſpiration. But I anſwer, that the words relate not to the matter, but to the Manner of our Prayers. *What to Pray for as we ought, we know not*; that is, we know not how to Pray with that fervency and reſignation, *which we ought*, unleſs the Spirit aſſiſt us. 2. As for the words of Prayer, there is no neceſſity they ſhou'd be immediately dictated to us, ſince we may uſe Forms; and thoſe Forms (with ſmall additions) may be adapted to all particular Caſes and Circumſtances. 3. If Prayers are Inſpir'd, they are equal to *Scripture*, and are infallible and the

Word of God; becauſe whatever God inſpires, muſt needs be ſo. But this, I am ſure, no ſober *Diſſenter* will preſume to ſay. 4. There is no ſign of this immediate Inſpiration remaining among us. Heretofore all Inſpiration was atteſted by Miracles; but the pretended Inſpiration of Prayer has no Miracles to warrant it. Whereas if the Inſpiration be continu'd, 'tis requiſite that proper ſigns ſhou'd be continu'd, that ſo we may be able to diſtinguiſh that which is Divine from that which is Natural or Diabolical.

If it be ſaid, that the *Scripture* is ſufficient to diſtinguiſh them; I anſwer, that tho' the *Scripture* may be ſufficient to diſtinguiſh, whether the Matter of the Inſpiration be true or falſe: yet it's not ſufficient to diſtinguiſh the Inſpiration it ſelf, whether it be Divine or Natural, or Diabolical.

For, 1. 'Tis certain, a Man may Pray agreeably to *Scripture* by Natural Inſpiration, that is, by a Natural or accidental fervency of temper, as might be prov'd by many inſtances. And in this caſe how ſhall he know by *Scripture*, whether his preſent Inſpiration be Natural or Divine? 'Twill be ſaid perhaps; that God Inſpires good Men with fervency in Prayer, and yet this fervency ſometimes proceeds from temper of body; and why do's not the want of a ſign to diſtinguiſh, conclude againſt the Inſpiration of fervency, as well as againſt the Inſpiration of the Matter and Words of Prayer? I anſwer, that we have a Promiſe of the Spirit's aſſiſtance for the fervency of our Prayers, but not for the Matter or Words of them. Beſides, we may eaſily diſtinguiſh, whether the Inſpiration of fervency be Natural

tural or Divine, by our own ſenſe. If it be accompany'd with a fixt and conſtant Devotion of Soul, 'tis Divine; but if it be only a ſudden fit, and leaves us habitually indevout, we have juſt reaſon to think it Natural. But we cannot diſtinguiſh by *Scripture* between one and the other; for both may be agreeable to *Scripture*. And can it be imagin'd, that had God meant to continue the gift of Inſpiration to us, he wou'd have left us thus in the dark concerning it, without any certain ſign to diſtinguiſh, whether it be from his Spirit, or from an ill-affected ſpleen, or a fever? 2. As for Diabolical Inſpirations, we have ſundry inſtances, ſuch as *Wier*, *Hacket*, D. *George* and *John Baſilides* Duke of *Ruſſia*, who had ſuch gifts of Prayer, as raviſh'd the Auditors, and in the opinion of the moſt impartial ſeem'd to exceed the power of Nature, and made many think them immediately Inſpir'd by God. Now ſince by ſuch Inſpirations the Devil may ſometimes ſerve his own ends, by recommending falſe Teachers, *&c.* we may reaſonably ſuppoſe he do's uſe that method. And ſince he may Inſpire Men with ſuch Matter of Prayer as is agreeable to *Scripture*, we cannot by *Scripture* certainly diſtinguiſh between his Inſpiration and that of the Spirit. But ſurely 'tis blaſphemy to think, that if God had continu'd this gift of Inſpiration, he wou'd leave us without a ſign to diſtinguiſh it from that which is Diabolical. And ſince there is no ſign, we have all the reaſon in the world to think the gift is ceas'd.

But farther, we have not only no certain ſign of the Divine Inſpiration of conceiv'd Prayers, but many very *certain* ones of the contrary: I will inſtance in four. 1. The great impertinence,

nonſence, and rudeneſs (to ſay no worſe) that are ſometimes mingled with theſe *Extempore* Prayers, and which we cannot attribute to the *Holy Ghoſt* without blaſphemy. 2. That they are ſo generally tinctur'd with the particular Opinions of thoſe that offer them. Whether this be not ſo, I appeal to all the world; and if it be ſo, then ſurely they are not Inſpir'd. For either we muſt ſuppoſe this gift of Inſpiration to be confin'd to one party, which wou'd be to *ſtint the Spirit* with a witneſs; or elſe we muſt blaſphemouſly ſay the Spirit Inſpires contradictions, and indites contrary Prayers to Men of oppoſite Parties. 3. Another plain ſign that conceiv'd Prayers are not Inſpir'd, is, that that which gives them the reputation of being ſo, is not ſo much the Matter, as the manner of expreſſing them. As for the Matter, I ſuppoſe the *Diſſenters* will not deny, but our Forms may equal at leaſt, if not excell their conceiv'd Prayers: and therefore all the difference muſt be in the Manner. But are conceiv'd Prayers the more Inſpir'd, becauſe the words are *Extempore?* Did God continue the gift for no other end, but that Men might ask thoſe things *Extempore*, which they might as well have asked in a Form? Or are they more Inſpired, becauſe they do generally more enlarge, and expreſs the ſame Matter over again in different words? Was the Spirit continu'd only to vary phraſes? Our *Saviour* forbids us *to uſe vain repetitions* (or as *Munſter's Hebrew* reads it, *to multiply words above what is fit and ſeaſonable) thinking we ſhall be heard for our much ſpeaking*; and therefore theſe enlargements are ſo far from being ſigns of their immediate Inſpiration, that ſuppoſing the Spirit to be of the ſame mind with *Chriſt*, they

they are generally signs of the contrary. 4. That extraordinary manner and way of expressing them, for which they are thought to be Inspir'd, ordinarily proceeds from natural causes, *viz.* Natural Enthusiasm or present fervour of temper. For, 1. The *Dissenters* confess, it comes upon them much oftner in their public, than in their private Devotions. And the reason is plain, because the passions of the Congregation do so excite their affections, and the reverence of an Auditory obliges them so much to wreck their inventions, that their Spirits are many times transported into raptures. 2. They are not so fluent in the beginning, as when they have Pray'd a while; the reason of which is this, because the Spirits do not move so briskly, till they are chafed and heated with Labour. Then do they naturally raise the fancy, and render the invention more copious and easy. And certainly 'tis unwarrantable to attribute that to Inspiration, which do's so apparently proceed from natural causes.

Thus have I shewn, what the extraordinary operations of the Spirit are, and that they are not to be pretended to in these Times; I proceed in the next place to shew very briefly, what those ordinary operations are, which he has Promis'd to continue to the end of the World. They are therefore the proper graces and affections of Prayer, such as shame, sorrow, hope, *&c.* But as for the expressions of Prayer, they are of no account with God, but as they signify to him the graces and affections of it. Now can any Man imagin, that those affections will be the less acceptable to God, because they are presented in a *Form*, and not *Extempore*? Will a Father deny Bread to his Child, because he 'askt it to day

in the ſame words, that he did yeſterday? Is God more taken with words, than with affections? Certainly his withdrawing the Inſpiration of words, and continuing the Inſpiration of affections, prove the contrary.

Now that God do's continue the Inſpiration of Devout affections in Prayer, is manifeſt from *Gal.* 4. 6. *Jude* 20. and *Rom.* 8. 26. where the Spirit is ſaid to *make interceſſion for us with groans, which cannot be utter'd*, that is, with moſt flagrant affections. For theſe words do not, as ſome perſons wou'd perſuade us, prove the Inſpiration of the Words of Prayer; becauſe the Inſpiration of thoſe things *that are too big for words and cannot be uttered,* cannot mean the Inſpiration of words: but this Interceſſion of the Spirit ſignifies his exciting ſuch affections, as make our Prayers acceptable. For as *Chriſt*, who is our Advocate in Heaven, enforces our Prayers with his own Interceſſions: ſo the Spirit, who is our Advocate upon Earth, begets thoſe affections, which render our Prayers prevalent. And theſe are the ſtanding and ordinary operations, which the *Scripture* attributes to the Spirit in Prayer.

Secondly, *Stinting* or *limiting the Spirit* is a phraſe, that is never mention'd in *Scripture* or Antiquity; and therefore 'tis a *very new* objection againſt Forms of Prayer, which I have ſhewn to be warranted both by *Scripture* and Antiquity. However, what the *Diſſenters* mean by it is this; *viz.* that by confining our ſelves to a Form of words, we (*ſtint* or *limit*, that is,) reſtrain the Spirit from giving us that aſſiſtance, which he ordinarily vouchſafes in conceiv'd Prayer.

And now having explain'd the *Two* forgoing particulars, the anſwer to this Objection will be very

very eaſy. For if the Spirit be ſtinted or reſtrain'd by Forms of Prayer, it muſt be either from Inſpiring the words, or from exciting the affections of Prayer. But I have prov'd that Forms are ſo far from reſtraining the Devotion of Prayer, that they do very much promote and improve it; and as for the Words, I have prov'd, that ſince the firſt propagation of the Goſpel the Spirit has withdrawn the immediate and Miraculous Inſpiration of them. And ſince that cannot be ſtinted which is not, therefore the Inſpiration of the Words of Prayer is not ſtinted by Forms.

3. 'Tis Objected, that public Forms are a ſinful neglect of the Miniſterial gift of Prayer. For, the *Diſſenters* ſay, the *gift of Prayer* is an ability to expreſs our minds in Prayer, which God has given to Miniſters, as a means of public Devotion; and therefore they may not omit the exerciſe of it, by uſing Forms of other Mens Compoſure. Now to this I anſwer, 1. That ſuppoſing that 'tis a fault in Miniſters to omit the exerciſe of their ability, yet the People are not to be charged with it. God will not reject the People's Devotions, becauſe the Miniſter is to blame. He only is accountable for that; for the People do not join with him in his omiſſion, but in that which is acceptable to God. 2. This gift of Prayer is either natural or acquir'd. For certainly 'tis not Inſpir'd at Ordination; becauſe the *Scripture* do's not promiſe any ſuch thing, nor is there any experience of it. Nay the Diſſenting Miniſters muſt own, that juſt before their Ordination they were as able to expreſs the Devotions of a Congregation, as they were juſt after; which ſhews that they had no new ability to Pray Inſpir'd in their Ordination. Now ſince this gift

or ability is nothing more than a quickneſs of invention and ſpeech, which is either natural, or acquir'd by art and practice; therefore 'tis no otherwiſe the gift of God, than our natural ſtrength, or skill in Hiſtory, or the like. All that God has Promis'd his Miniſters, is to concur with their honeſt endeavours, as far as is neceſſary to the diſcharge of their Office: and to ſuppoſe that this cannot be done without Praying *Extempore*, is to take the Matter in queſtion for granted. 3. This freedom of utterance is never call'd the *gift of Prayer* in *Scripture*. Praying in unknown Languages is once call'd a *gift*, but Praying in our own Language is never call'd ſo. Therefore 'tis plain that the gift of readineſs of ſpeech is not appropriated by God to Prayer, but left in common to all other honeſt uſes, that it can be apply'd to; and it may as well be call'd the *Gift of Pleading at the Bar*, or *of Diſputing*, or *Converſation*, as the *gift of Prayer*. Accordingly we find, that thoſe who have this gift in Prayer, have it alſo upon other occaſions; which proves, that 'tis not appropriated to Prayer. 4. Since this gift of expreſſing our minds is not appropriated to Prayer, it may be as lawfully omitted in Prayer, as in any other purpoſe which 'tis deſign'd for. For if it be unlawful to omit the uſe of the gift of Elocution, then he who has the gift, may not lawfully uſe a Form in Petitioning his Prince, or in a Court of Juſtice: but if it be lawful to omit it in theſe caſes, as a Man ſees occaſion, then it is equally lawful to omit it in Prayer. In ſhort, if a Man has two gifts, he may uſe which he pleaſes; and ſince we have other means of Prayer, none is obliged to uſe his ability to pray *Extempore*. 5. Uſing a Form is as much a means of public Devotion

tion as praying *Extempore*; becauſe the end of public Prayer is at leaſt as effectually ſerv'd by a Form, as by a conceiv'd Prayer. Now ſince there are two means of Prayer, and both cannot be us'd at the ſame time, therefore one may be lawfully omitted; and conſequently the uſe of a Form, which is one means, is not a ſinful neglect of the other.

4. The laſt Objection is, that the Common Caſes and wants of Chriſtians cannot be ſo well expreſs'd in one conſtant Form, as in conceiv'd Prayers; becauſe the circumſtances of Men are infinitely variable, and require ſutable Petitions and Thankſgivings, which the Miniſter cannot otherwiſe provide than by praying *Extempore*. To this I anſwer, 1. That the Common Caſes and neceſſities of Chriſtians are for the Main alwaies the ſame, and therefore may be more fully comprehended in a Form, than in an *Extempore* Prayer. For public Prayers, which are offer'd up in the Name of the whole Congregation, ought not to deſcend to particular Caſes, but only to the Common Caſes of all, and what every one may truly and ſincerely join with. Now a Form will expreſs them much better than an *Extempore* Prayer, which is ſubject to many omiſſions. 2. Forms can make as good proviſion for Extraordinary caſes, as *Extempore* Prayer. For, as for thoſe that can be foreſeen, ſuch as the want of rain, fair weather, *&c.* there may be Forms compos'd for them afore-hand: and as for others that cannot be fore-ſeen, Forms may be provided, when they happen; and this has ever been done in our Church. 3. If Forms muſt not be us'd, becauſe they do not alwaies reach *Extraordinary Caſes*, certainly *Extempore* Prayers ought not to be us'd, becauſe

by reaſon of omiſſions, they will not alwaies reach even *Ordinary Caſes*. In a word, it appears that all Extraordinary Caſes may be very well provided for by Forms; but ſuppoſing it otherwiſe, yet ſince it has been prov'd at large, that the uſe of Forms is upon ſundry accounts of great advantage to the public Devotion, 'tis unreaſonable to ſpoil the Church of them, and leave her to the mercy of *Extempore* effuſions, only for the ſake of a few contingencies, which may happen but very rarely, if at all, in a whole Age.

III. I am now to prove in the laſt place, that *the impoſition of Forms may be lawfully comply'd with*; and for this a very few words will ſuffice. For ſince the uſe of public Forms is lawful in it ſelf, therefore it may be lawfully comply'd with; becauſe I have ſhewn in the *Second Chapter*, that a Man may lawfully do a lawful thing, when 'tis injoin'd by Authority. And now I hope, it is evident to all impartial Readers, that Forms of Prayer are not only *lawful*, but *expedient* alſo.

CHAP. IV.

Objections againſt our Morning *and* Evening Service *and* Litany *Anſwer'd.*

HAving juſtified Forms of Prayer in general, my duty and method oblige me to juſtify that of the *Church* of *England* in particular. I muſt confeſs, I have alwaies thought the *Liturgy* of the *Church* of *England* to be ſuch, as wou'd rather have invited *Proteſtants* to our Communion, than have kept them from it. And I believe, if the *Diſſenters* wou'd ſeriouſly read over

over Dr. *Beverege*'s Sermon concerning the Excellency and uſefulneſs of the *Common-Prayer*, they wou'd go near to be of the ſame mind. But alas! this very *Liturgy* is that which many perſons are incens'd againſt. It has been cry'd down as *Idolatrous*, *Popiſh*, *Superſtitious*, &c. 'Tis true, we do not now ſo often hear thoſe bitter exclamations of *Rome* and *Babylon*, *Baal* and *Dagon*; for the *Common-Prayer* is not now eſteem'd ſuch an abominable thing, as ſome ignorant and heady Zealots were wont to count it: but yet ſome Objections are ſtill inſiſted upon, to which I hope to return a fair anſwer.

1. Then 'tis Objected, that the *Confeſſions of ſin* in our *Liturgy* are too general; and that there are many particular ſins, which ought to have been *diſtinctly* confeſs'd, of which there is no mention. But I deſire the Objectors to conſider, that there is hardly any thing in public worſhip, which requires more caution and prudence in the ordering of it, than that confeſſion of ſin, which is to be made by the whole Congregation. 'Tis hard to prevent its being either too general or too particular. The reaſon is, becauſe ſuch different perſons muſt join in it, and the ſins of ſome are more numerous and grievous than the ſins of others; ſo that all perſons cannot poſſibly make the ſame particular confeſſion. But I think our confeſſions, *viz.* the *daily* one and that in the *Communion-Office*, are ſo judiciouſly fram'd, as to avoid both extreams: and I am perſuaded, all perſons may profitably uſe them. However, the confeſſion of ſin after the Miniſter has recited each of the *Ten Commandments*, is as particular, as can reaſonably be deſir'd; and by this a Man may confeſs all his known offences in thought, word or deed.

deed. If a Man muſt not uſe a confeſſion, that is poſſible to be mended, he muſt never confeſs at all: and if a Form of confeſſion were compos'd by the wiſeſt *Diſſenters*, I ſuppoſe no more wou'd be pretended, but that it might be profitably us'd. Now this may be ſaid of our Form, and ought to end the diſpute.

Indeed there are examples of *Jeremiah*, *Nehemiah*, &c. confeſſing ſuch ſins as they were not guilty of: but this was done upon ſolemn humiliation for thoſe known and public Idolatries of the Nation, which had brought God's heavy judgments upon them, or for common and ſcandalous tranſgreſſions afterward. They conſider'd themſelves as a part of the Community which had provok'd God; and they bare a part in the Calamity and in the confeſſion, as if they had offended as greatly as their Country-men. But I conceive there is a great deal of difference between thoſe confeſſions upon ſuch public humiliations, and thoſe that are fit for the Ordinary Service of the Church.

I may add, that particular confeſſions are more properly the matter of private Devotion; and if we did ſeriouſly practiſe ſtrict examination and ſecret contrition in our Cloſets, we ſhou'd then find our affections prepar'd to comply with thoſe more general confeſſions of ſin, which we make with the whole Congregation. And we ſhou'd then have leſs reaſon to complain, that thoſe confeſſions are too general and not apt to move us; becauſe this wou'd cure the *deadneſs of our hearts*, which are commonly moſt to blame, when we find fault with the Means, that God has provided for us.

2. The next Objection is the *ſhortneſs of our Collects*,

Collects, by reaſon of which 'tis pretended, that the Prayer is often ſuddenly broken off, and then begun again: and this is thought not ſo agreeable to the gravity wherewith this duty ought to be perform'd, nor ſo likely a means of exciting Reverence and Devotion in the People, as one continu'd Form of Prayer, that might be as long as all thoſe put together. To this I anſwer, 1. That the mere ſhortneſs of a Prayer is not to be blam'd; ſince that wou'd diſparage the Form, which *Chriſt* taught his Diſciples. 2. That 'twill be hard to prove, that many of theſe ſhort Prayers being offer'd up to God one immediately after another, is either not ſo grave or not ſo edifying, as one continu'd Form. For the work of Praying is as much continu'd all the while, as if there were but one continu'd Form; becauſe we paſs from one Petition to another, or from one matter of invocation to another, as immediately as if the diſtinct Forms were all brought into the compaſs of one. Nay the *attention* of the People is rather help'd by the frequency of ſaying *Amen:* and their *Godly diſpoſition of mind*, which is the beſt thing in Prayer, may be kept alive and more effectually ſecur'd, by calling upon the Name of God and pleading the Merits of *Chriſt* ſo often as we do. Beſides, the invocation of God ſomewhat often by his attributes, maintains in our minds a reverent ſenſe of his Majeſtic Preſence; which we all know, is needful to make us pray as we ought: and the frequency of mentioning *Chriſt*'s Merits and Mediation, ſtrengthens our faith and aſſurance that we ſhall be heard. 'Tis alſo the peculiar Character of Chriſtian Devotion; and diſtinguiſhes us from the *Papiſts*, in declaring our deteſtation of calling upon God in the Name of Saints, or any other but

that

that of *Chriſt*. If it be ſaid that we ſay *Amen*, and break off our Prayers too often; I reply, that all wiſe and humble Men will ſubmit themſelves in that caſe to the judgment of their ſuperiours.

3. Some except againſt the repetition of the *Lord's Prayer*, and of *Glory be to the Father*, &c. and of *Lord have mercy upon us*, and the like; becauſe they think our *Saviour* forbids it by ſaying, *when ye pray, uſe not vain repetitions*. But it appears by our *Saviour*'s caution againſt *vain* repetitions, that ſome repetitions are not *vain*, and conſequently not forbidden. This muſt be ſuppos'd, becauſe he himſelf, when in his Agony, pray'd thrice in the ſame words. Now *Chriſt* forbids the fault of the Heathens, whoſe vain repetitions proceeded from an affectation of ſpeaking much, or from a belief that God wou'd not help them, unleſs they repeated the ſame thing over in a tedious manner: but the repetition of good Prayers is nothing like their practice. Repetitions are not vain, if two things be regarded; 1. That the matter be very weighty, and apt to move thoſe pious affections, which God is moſt pleas'd with in our Addreſſes to him; and in this reſpect, I dare ſay, our repetitions are ſecur'd from vanity. 2. That they be fram'd with judgment, that they come in fitly and in due place, and not too often. And theſe rules are obſerv'd in our Liturgy; for as none did ever blame the diſpoſal of our repetitions, ſo none can juſtly blame the frequency of them. For our repetitions are very few; but if our number be too great, what ſhall we think of the 136 *Pſalm*, where *His mercy endureth forever*, is repeated 26 times? To conclude this matter, I deſire thoſe, who do not yet approve our repetition

repetition of the *Lord's Prayer*, &c. to conſider, whether it be ſo eaſy to ſpend the time it takes up more profitably, than by joining in good earneſt with the Congregation in theſe Prayers..

4. Some perſons diſlike the *Reſponſals* of the Congregation, and the People's ſaying the *Confeſſions* and the *Lord's Prayer* after the Miniſter, and their *alternate reciting* the Pſalms and Hymns, and ſome petitions in the daily Service. Now I beg theſe Men to conſider, what has been often ſaid, *viz.* that this way is apt to check a wandring Spirit, to help attention and quicken a lively zeal in God's Service, whilſt we invite and provoke one another to pray and give thanks.

They ſay indeed, that the Miniſter is appointed to be the mouth of the People in God's public Service: but to this I anſwer, 1. That granting the Miniſter to be appointed for the mouth of the People, yet it muſt not be ſo interpreted, as to make all Vocal Prayer and thankſgiving in Religious Aſſemblies unlawful to the People. For then the People muſt not ſay *Amen*, which is a ſhort reſponſal to the Miniſter; nor muſt they join in ſinging Pſalms, which oftentimes contain matter of Prayer. 2. The *Scripture* do's not ſay, that *the Miniſter is the mouth of the People to God*, or that no Prayer muſt be offer'd up in Religious Aſſemblies, otherwiſe than by the mouth of the Miniſter. 'Tis true, the Miniſter is the mouth of the People in all thoſe Prayers which he utters for them; and becauſe theſe are many more than what the People themſelves utter, he may be ſaid to be their mouth to God *comparatively*, but not *abſolutely*. 'Tis true alſo, that the Miniſter is appointed for the People in all public Services appertaining to God, if this be underſtood for the moſt

moſt part, or of all with little exception. Some public Services are pronounced by him only: and as for the reſt, 'tis fit he ſhou'd ever utter moſt of them; and that in thoſe wherein the People have their part, he ſhou'd ever go before and lead them, and guide the whole performance; which is all taken care for in our Liturgy.

Nay the *Diſſenters* themſelves do not utterly debar the People from all Vocal Prayer and Thankſgiving of their own in God's ſolemn Worſhip. For they allow the People to ſing Pſalms; and why then may they not bear a part in the Hymns and Pſalms by alternate reſponſes? I cannot ſee, why ſinging or not ſinging ſhou'd make ſuch a difference. 'Twere better, if they were every where ſung; becauſe it is more ſutable to the deſign of them, than bare reciting is: but if they be not ſung, the next uſe of them, that is moſt agreeable to their nature and deſign, is reciting them by anſwering in turns, as the Cuſtom is with us; for this is much nearer to ſinging, than the Miniſter's reciting all himſelf.

But, ſay they, the People's verſe is in a manner loſt to ſome of the Congregation; ſince in the confus'd murmur of ſo many voices nothing can be diſtinctly heard To this I anſwer, that thoſe who can read, may bring Books; and thoſe that cannot, may attend to thoſe that are near. Nay I have been credibly inform'd, that ſome devout People that cou'd never read, have attain'd to an ability of reciting moſt of the Pſalms without book, by often hearing them in thoſe Churches where they are alternately recited. I ſhall add, that for the moſt part, the Pſalms are recited alternately in thoſe Churches only, where it may be

be reaſonably preſum'd, that the whole Congregation can read, very few excepted.

Now if the People may join in Vocal Praiſe, why may they not alſo join in Vocal Prayer? If it be ſaid, there is ſome example or warrant in *Scripture* for the one, but not for the other; it ſeems to be a good anſwer, that there is ſuch a parity of reaſon, as that the expreſs warrant of *Scripture* for the one, is an imply'd warrant for the other. I have already ſhewn, *Chap.* 3. that the People's joining in Vocal Prayer was very anciently practis'd; and if this was the Primitive way, 'tis probable, that it was the way in the Apoſtles times. I know, 'tis objected, that the People's ſpeaking to God in the Church is diſorderly, and a breaking in upon the Miniſter's office. But will they ſay, that the *Children of Iſrael* intrench'd upon the Prieſt, when *they all bowed themſelves upon the Pavement, and worſhipped the Lord, and prais'd him, ſaying, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever*; 2 Chron. 7. 3? Eccleſiaſtical Order is ſecur'd by the Miniſter's preſiding in God's public Worſhip, and guiding the performance of it: but not to allow the People to make an *Audible confeſſion of ſin* after the Miniſter, nor to utter *ſome few affectionate Petitions*, and thoſe very ſhort, to which they are alſo *invited* and led by him, ſeems rather to ſavour of an affectation of undue ſuperiority over the People, than to proceed from any fear of the Miniſter's office being invaded. Some urge, that Women are forbidden to *ſpeak in the Church*, 1 Cor. 14. 34. but this is ſtrangely miſapply'd to the Matter in hand. For 'tis plain, that the *ſpeaking* mention'd by the Apoſtle, ſignifies nothing but Propheſying, Interpreting, Preaching and Inſtructing; and that the

reaſon, why he will not allow this to the Woman, is, becauſe Preaching implies Authority, whereas the Woman's part is obedience and ſubjection. They that will read the whole *Chapter*, will find that this is the meaning of St. *Paul*.

5. I proceed in the next place to conſider, whether there be any juſt cauſe to find fault with the reading of the *Apocryphal Leſſons* in our Church. Now if *Sermons* and *Catechizing* be allowable, beſides the Word of God; why may not ſome *Apocryphal Leſſons* be read, which contain excellent Rules of life? Eſpecially ſince thoſe Writings were greatly eſteemed by the Church in its pureſt Ages, when they and other human writings alſo were publicly read, as well as the *Scriptures*: and thoſe *Chapters* of the *Old Teſtament*, which are omitted, do either recite *Genealogies*, or the Rules of the *Levitical* Service, or matters of fact deliver'd in other *Chapters* that are read, or which are hard to be underſtood. If it be ſaid, that becauſe the *Scripture* is all of Divine Authority, 'tis more profitable to read any part of that, than any other good Leſſon; I anſwer, that then no place will be left for Sermons, which are no more of Divine Authority, than the *Apocryphal Leſſons*. There is no danger of any perſon's miſtaking the *Apocryphal Leſſons* for Canonical *Scripture*, becauſe the Church ſpeaks ſo plainly in her Sixth Article: nor do we read them otherwiſe, than the antient Church did. I ſhall only add, that no *Apocryphal Leſſon* is read upon any Lord's Day in the Year; and as for other exceptions, I refer the Reader to Dr. *Falkener's* Libertas *Eccleſ.* p. 164, &c.

6. If any object againſt our *Standing at the Creed*

Creed; Mr. *Baxter* ſaies, *his judgment is for it, where it is required, and where not doing it wou'd be diviſive and ſcandalous.* Nay, elſewhere he ſaies, that *'tis a convenient praiſing geſture*, &c. See his *Chriſt. Direct.* p. 858.

I proceed now to the Vindication of the *Litany*, againſt which 'tis pleaded, 1. That *the People utter the Words of invocation in the Litany for the moſt part*, the Miniſter all the while *ſuggeſting the matter of it to them.* But this Objection is of no force, if what I have ſaid concerning the lawfulneſs of allowing the People an intereſt in Vocal Prayer, be admitted. If it be ſaid, that the People bear *too conſiderable a part*, to the diſparagement of the Miniſter's office; I anſwer, that 'tis a great miſtake; For 1. tho' the People ſay *Good Lord deliver us*, and *We beſeech thee to hear us Good Lord*; yet the Miniſter ſaies the *other*, and the *far greater* part of the Prayer. 2. They are but theſe Two ſhort and known Petitions, which are excepted againſt: and if the People may be allowed any part in Vocal Prayer, I know of nothing more proper than theſe; nor are they repeated, but when they are apply'd to new and diſtinct matter. Beſides, they relieve our attention, and cheriſh our warm affections in Prayer: and I could almoſt appeal to the keeneſt of our Adverſaries, whether, if *Good Lord deliver us* were apply'd but once in groſs to that part of the Litany, we ſhou'd not be more apt to languiſh in the offering it up, than as it is now ordered. But, 3. 'Tis plain, that in thoſe Prayers, the Miniſter has the principal and guiding part, in that he utters all the *diſtinct matter* of the Prayer, which the People do not; whereas he utters words of *invocation* as well as they. 'And

conſider, I pray, whether if the People were to utter that which is the Miniſter's part now, and the Miniſter to ſay that only which is theirs; we ſhou'd not have more grievous complaints, that the Miniſter's authority was ſlighted in the whole deſign; ſince he ſeem'd only to learn from the People, what the Congregation was to pray for.

2. 'Tis Objected, that we pray to be deliver'd *from all deadly ſin*, which ſeems to imply, that there are ſome ſins which are not deadly. Now in anſwer to this, it is by ſome truly enough ſaid, that theſe words do not neceſſarily imply a diſtinction between ſins that *are*, and ſins that *are not deadly*. But admitting that ſuch a diſtinction were intended, yet we muſt obſerve, that tho' all ſin be in its own nature *deadly* or damnable; yet thro' the Mercy of God and the Merits of Chriſt, ſins of mere infirmity are not imputed, and therefore not *deadly* to us. But there are ſome ſins ſo heinous, that he who commits them, is thereby put into a damnable ſtate: and 'tis of ſuch ſins as theſe that this paſſage is to be underſtood; as appears by *Deadly Sin* being added to Fornication, *from Fornication and all other Deadly Sin, Good Lord deliver us.*

3. Some are offended with our praying againſt *Sudden Death*. But why ſhou'd we not by *Sudden Death* underſtand our being taken out of this World, when we are not fit to die? For ſometimes a thing is ſaid to be *Sudden* to us, when we are not prepar'd for it. And in this ſence can any good Chriſtian find fault with the Petition? But ſuppoſe that by *Sudden Death* we mean what is commonly underſtood by it, that is, a Death of which a Man has not the leaſt warning by Sickneſs;

neſs; are there not Reaſons why even good Men may deſire not to die ſuddenly? May they not, when they find themſelves drawing towards their end, by their good Inſtructions and Admonitions, make Impreſſions upon their Friends, Companions, and Relations, to the bettering of them? May not their Counſels be then more effectual with them, than ever they were before? And is it not reaſonable to believe they will be ſo? As for themſelves, may not the warning they have of approaching Death be improv'd to make them more fit to die, than they were in their perfect Health? In a word, he that thinks himſelf to have ſufficiently *perfected holineſs in the fear of God*, and not to ſtand in need of thoſe acts of Self-Examination, Humiliation, and Devotion, by which Good Men improve the Warning of Death, which Mortal Sickneſs or Extreme Age gives them; let him ſuſpend his Act, and refuſe to join with us, when we pray God to *deliver us from ſudden death*.

4. Some are offended, that we pray to be deliver'd *By the Myſtery of Chriſt's Holy Incarnation*, &c. *By his Agony and bloody Sweat, by his Croſs and Paſſion*, &c. *And by the Coming of the Holy Ghoſt*. Some ſay this is *Swearing*, others *Conjuring*, and I know not what. To theſe I anſwer, that when we ſay, *By the Myſtery of thy holy Incarnation*, and *by thy Croſs and Paſſion*, &c. *Good Lord deliver us*; we implore Chriſt, who has already ſhew'd ſuch ineſtimable goodneſs towards us, by taking our Nature into his Divinity, to *Die upon the Croſs*, to be *Buried*, to *Riſe again*, to *aſcend into Heaven*, and there to *intercede with the Father for us*, and by *ſending the Holy Ghoſt* to qualifie the Apoſtles for their great Work of carrying

the Word of Salvation into the World: I ſay, we implore him who hath already done ſuch mighty things for our Salvation, and we plead with him by that goodneſs which he has already given us ſuch great demonſtrations of, by thoſe Wonders of Mercy that he has wrought for us, that he wou'd now go on to deliver us by his powerful Grace from thoſe Evils which we pray againſt. And this is ſo reaſonable, ſo devout and affectionate, ſo humble and thankful a way of praying, that I am ſorry that any who call themſelves Believers ſhou'd be ſo ignorant as not to underſtand it, or ſo profane and unlike what they pretend to be, as to deride it.

To conclude, I muſt confeſs, that of all the Prayers in our Liturgy, that are of humane compoſition, I ſhou'd be moſt unwilling to part with the *Litany*. It ſeems to be, what it was deſign'd to be, *A Form of Prayer apt to excite our moſt intenſe and fervent deſires of God's Grace and Mercy.* The whole office is fram'd, with reſpect both to matter and contrivance, for the raiſing of the utmoſt Devotion of good Chriſtians, and for the warming of the coldeſt hearts by the heat of the Congregation. And in ſuch a diſpoſition it is moſt fit to expreſs our Charity, by praying for others, even all ſorts of men, as diſtinctly and particularly as public Prayers will bear.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Of Infant-Baptiſm.

BEfore I proceed to the Vindication of our Office of *Baptiſm*, I think it is proper to juſtify *Infant-Baptiſm*, which is practis'd by us, and diſlik'd by ſome of the *Diſſenters*. And that my Diſcourſe concerning *Infant-Baptiſm* may be the better underſtood, I ſhall take the liberty of premiſing a few things.

1. That the Original of the *Jewiſh* Church (conſider'd purely as a Church) is to be dated from the Covenant which God made with *Abraham*; but that of the *Jewiſh* Common-wealth from the delivery of the Law by *Moſes*. For that the *Jewiſh* Church and Common-wealth are diſtinct things, is plain, becauſe the Apoſtle makes this diſtinction, *Rom.* 4. 13. *Gal.* 3. 17. And therefore,

2. The way to find out the Nature of the *Jewiſh* Church is to conſider the Nature of the Covenant made with *Abraham*, upon which the *Jewiſh* Church was founded. Now 'tis plain from *Rom.* 4. 9th to the 17th, and 9. 6, &c. *Gal.* 3. 5, &c. that the Covenant made with *Abraham* was a Spiritual Covenant, made with him as *the Father of Believers*, and with his Poſterity, not as proceeding from him by Natural, but by Spiritual Generation, as heirs of his Faith. Hence ſaies the Apoſtle, in the name of the Chriſtians, *We are the Circumciſion, which worſhip God in the Spirit, and have no confidence in the Fleſh*, Phil. 3. 3. and *it is one God, which ſhall juſtify the Circumciſion by Faith, and the Uncircumciſion thro' Faith*,

Rom. 3. 30. and *if ye be Chriſt's, then are ye Abraham's Seed, and heirs according to the Promiſe*, Gal. 3. 29. Nay 'twill farther appear, that this Covenant was made, not with *Abraham*'s Natural, but his Spiritual Off-ſpring, if we conſider,

3. That the initiatory Sacrament into it was *Circumciſion*. For the Covenant is call'd the *Covenant of Circumciſion*, Acts 7. 8. and Circumciſion on the other hand is call'd *the Seal of the Righteouſneſs of faith*, Rom. 4. 11. faith or faithful obedience being the condition of that Covenant, which God requir'd of the Children of *Abraham*, and which they promis'd to perform. It alſo ſignify'd *the Circumciſion of the heart*, Deut. 10. 16. and 30. 6. Rom. 2. 28, 29.

4. As to the Perſons to be admitted into the Covenant, we have a very plain account at the inſtitution of it, *Gen.* 17. from whence it appears, *Firſt*, that the Children of Heathens were to be circumcis'd; (See *Exod.* 12. 48, 49.) which alſo proves that the Promiſe was made, not to his Natural, but to his Spiritual Children. Hence in all Ages great numbers of Gentiles were admitted into the *Jewiſh* Church by Circumciſion. *Secondly*, that perſons of all Ages were to be Circumcis'd, and that God was ſo far from excluding Children from Circumciſion, that he order'd that the Circumciſion of them ſhou'd not be deferr'd beyond the 8th day. God was pleas'd to be ſo gracious as to chuſe the Children with their Parents, and look upon them as holy upon their account. This was ground enough for their Admiſſion into the Church, and for God to look upon them as *Believers*, tho' they cou'd not make open profeſſion of their faith.

The Faith and conſent of the Father or the God-

God-father, and of the Congregation under which he was Circumcis'd, was believ'd of Old by the *Jews* to be imputed to the Child as his own Faith and conſent. See *Seld.* De Jure, *lib.* 2. *c.* 2. De Synedr. *lib.* 1. *c.* 3. And they had good ground in *Scripture* for this opinion; becauſe the infidelity and diſobedience of the Parents, in wilfully neglecting or deſpiſing the Circumciſion, was imputed to the Children, who were eſteem'd and puniſh'd as breakers of the Covenant, when they were not Circumcis'd, *Gen.* 17. 14. And therefore, if the act of Parents in neglecting to bring their Children to Circumciſion was reputed theirs: much more their act in bringing them to it, might well be reputed as their act and deed. Thus *Numb.* 3. 28. we find the keeping of the ſanctuary imputed to the Males of the *Cohathites*, of a month old and upwards; becauſe their Fathers actually kept it, and they were to be train'd up to it. Thus *Deut.* 29. 11, 12. the *little ones* are expreſly ſaid to enter into the Covenant with God, becauſe the Men of *Iſrael* did ſo. Thus alſo, tho' *Chriſt* heal'd grown Perſons for their own Faith, *Matth.* 9. 29. yet he heal'd Children for the Faith of their Parents, or others who beſought him for them; as it were imputing it to them for their own Faith; *Mark* 9. 23. *Matth.* 8. 13. *John* 4. 50. Vid. *Caſſand.* De Baptiſmo Infant. *p.* 729. *Taylor* of Baptiz. Inf. Great Exemplar, *Part* 1. *Sect.* 9.

5. The Church was the ſame for ſubſtance under the Law, as it was before it; and ſtill remains the ſame for ſubſtance under the Goſpel, as it was under the Law. For *Abraham* is ſtill *the Father of the faithful:* and we that Believe under the Goſpel, are as much his Children, in the true meaning of

the words, as thoſe that were Believers under the Law. Hence St. *Peter*, Epiſt. 1. calls Chriſtians by thoſe Titles, which God gave to the *Jews*, as to his peculiar People, *viz.* a *Choſen Generation*, *Royal Prieſthood*, &c. and St. *Paul* compares the calling of them to the engrafting of the *Wild Olive-tree* into the *Old Olive-tree*'s Stock, *Rom.* 11. *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles introduc'd as much of *Judaiſm* into the Chriſtian Church, as the nature of the Reformation wou'd bear: and adher'd as much as they cou'd to the *Old*, both in the Matter and Form of the *New* Oeconomy. For the proof of this the Reader may conſult *Grot.* Opuſc. *Tom.* 3. *p.* 510, 520, &c. *Hammond* of Baptizing Infants, *Selden* de Jure, *l.* 2. *c.* 2. de Synedr. *l.* 1. *c.* 3. *Lightfoot*'s Horæ Heb. *p.* 42. *Hammond* on Matth. 2. 1, *Alting.* Diſſert Septima de Proſelyt. *Mede*'s 1 B. diſc. 43. 2 B. Chriſt. Sacrif. *Cudworth* on the Lord's Supper, *Thorndike* of Religious Aſſembl. *Taylor*'s Great Exemplar. *Part.* 1. *Diſc. of Baptiſm.* Numb. 11. *Dodwell*'s One Altar and One Prieſthood, *Lightfoot* on 1 Cor. 5. 4.

Some things, I confeſs, they laid aſide; but their Reaſons for ſo doing were, 1. Becauſe very many of the *Jewiſh* Rites were fulfilled in *Chriſt*; and this is ſo plain, that I need not prove it. 2. Becauſe many of them were inconſiſtent with the Nature of Chriſtianity; which was to be, 1. *Manly*, in oppoſition to the Law, which *was but a School-Maſter to bring them to Chriſt*, Gal. 3. 24. and the *Jews* were under it, as Children are under Tutors, *Chap.* 4. 1, 2, 3, 4. for they had Childiſh underſtandings, and were like Children, to be inſtructed by Symbolical Leſſons, *viz.* Waſhings, &c. 2. *Free*, in oppoſition to the ſervile Nature of the *Jewiſh* Church, which was loaded with number-

leſs

leſs obſervances, of which the *Jews* were grown weary, and with which they had been for a long time heavy laden, when Chriſt call'd them to take his yoke upon them, which was to be ſo eaſy and light. 3. *Univerſal*, God injoin'd the *Jews* many things, in oppoſition to the Neighbouring Idolatrous Nations; that there might be a mutual ſtrangeneſs between them, and that by Ceremonial ſingularities they might be diſtinguiſht from the reſt of the World: but then *Chriſt* coming to break down the Middle wall of Partition betwixt the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and to aboliſh the enmity of ordinances that was betwixt them, that he might make peace between them, and reconcile them both into one body; it was requiſite to this end, that he ſhou'd aboliſh theſe, and all oher diſtingiſhing characters betwixt them, which wou'd have hindred the progreſs of the Goſpel, becauſe they were become ſo odious and ridiculous to the *Gentile* World. And this is the reaſon, why the bloody Rite of *Circumciſion* is changed into the eaſy Rite of *Baptiſm*.

6. Circumciſion was a Sacrament of equal *Significancy*, *Force* and *Perfection* with *Baptiſm*; and *Baptiſm* ſucceeded in the room of it, not as an *Antitype* ſucceeds in the place of the *Type*, but as one poſitive inſtitution ſucceeds in the place of another. For we muſt note, that ſtrictly and properly ſpeaking, there was the ſame difference betwixt the *Type* and the *Antitype*, as betwixt the ſhadow and the ſubſtance, or betwixt a Man and his picture in a Glaſs; inſomuch that what was in the *Type*, did only repreſent ſomething which did in a more perfect manner belong to the *Antitype*. Thus the blood of Sacrifices repreſented the blood of *Chriſt*, which do's truly purge the Conſcience

ſcience from dead works; and the healing vertue of the Brazen Serpent was a Symbol of the healing vertue of *Chriſt* upon the Croſs. But the caſe is not ſo betwixt Circumciſion and *Baptiſm*; becauſe Circumciſion has no Symbolical likeneſs with *Baptiſm*, nor any thing belonging to it common to *Baptiſm*, which doth not as fully belong unto it, as unto *Baptiſm* it ſelf.

For, 1. Circumciſion was heretofore a real Sacrament of Initiation into the Covenant of Grace, a Seal of the Righteouſneſs of Faith, and a confirmation of the Covenant betwixt God and Man, as much as *Baptiſm* is now. *Baptiſm* do's nothing under the Goſpel, which Circumciſion did not as properly and effectually do under the Law: and therefore it cou'd not be a *Type* of *Baptiſm*, any more than the Broad-Seal of *England* 300 years ago was a *Type* of this. And accordingly 'tis never mention'd in the *New Teſtament* as a *Type* of *Baptiſm*, nor *Baptiſm* as the *Antitype* of it: but ſucceeded in the room of it, not as the *Antitype* did in the place of the Type, but as one abſolute Ordinance or poſitive Inſtitution do's in the place of another. 2. Circumciſion was not a *Type* of *Baptiſm*, becauſe a *Type* is an Exemplar appointed under the *Old Teſtament* to prefigure ſomething under the *New*: but *Baptiſm* was it ſelf of *Jewiſh* Inſtitution under the *Old Teſtament*; and by conſequence cou'd not be Typify'd and prefigur'd by Circumciſion, becauſe it was us'd together with it in the *Jewiſh* Church. The *Jewiſh* Church made it a Ceremony of Initiating Proſelytes under the Law; and our Saviour liking the Inſtitution, continu'd the uſe of it, and made it the *only* Ceremony of Initiating Proſelytes under the Goſpel; ſuperadding to it the compleat

nature

nature of an Initiatory Sacrament, or the full force of Circumciſion, as it was a ſign of the Covenant, and a ſeal of the Righteouſneſs of Faith.

Having premis'd theſe *Six* things, I proceed to the main buſineſs, in treating of which I deſign to ſhew, 1. That *Infants are capable of Baptiſm.* 2. That *They are not excluded from Baptiſm by Chriſt.* 3. That *'tis unlawful to ſeparate from a Church, which appoints Infants to be baptized,* 4. That *'tis the duty of Chriſtian Parents to bring their Children unto Baptiſm.* 5. That *'tis lawful to Communicate with Believers, who were Baptiz'd in their Infancy.*

I. Then I ſhall ſhew, that *Infants are capable of Baptiſm.* God commanded Infants to be Circumcis'd, as well as adult Perſons; and ſurely, if they were capable of Circumciſion, then they are alſo capable of *Baptiſm.* For the *Two* Covenants, of Circumciſion and Baptiſm, are for ſubſtance the ſame, and the grace of thoſe Covenants the very ſame; and therefore if the Initiation of Infants was then no abſurdity, it can be none now. Nay, if Infants were admitted into the Church, when the entrance was more grievous and not without Blood; how unreaſonable is it to aſſert, that they are now uncapable of admiſſion into it, when the entrance is made more eaſy, and more agreeable to the weakneſs of a tender Child?

'Tis ſaid indeed, that Infants are uncapable of *Baptiſm,* becauſe they cannot Anſwer the Ends of it; they cannot underſtand the Goſpel, or Profeſs their Faith and Repentance, or ſubmit to *Baptiſm* out of their own choice, nor can they have their Faith and Hope further ſtrengthen'd in the uſe of it. But this way of arguing is very weak and fallacious, and reflecting upon the Wiſdom of God.

Firſt,

Firſt, It is weak and fallacious, becauſe it makes no diſtinction betwixt a *ſtrict Inſtitution*, which is Inſtituted by God for one, or a few ends, and preciſely for perſons of one ſort; and an *Inſtitution of Latitude*, which is Inſtituted by him for ſeveral ends, and for different ſorts of Perſons, differently qualify'd for thoſe ſeveral ends. Of the firſt ſort was the *Jewiſh* Ordinance of *Fringes*, which cou'd only concern grown Perſons, becauſe they only were capable of anſwering the End, for which it was Inſtituted, *viz. To look upon them and remember the Commandments of the Lord*: and of the latter ſort is the Holy Ordinance of *Marriage*, which was appointed for ſeveral ends, and for perſons differently qualify'd for thoſe ſeveral ends; inſomuch that perſons who are incapacitated as to ſome ends of Marriage, may yet honeſtly Marry, becauſe they are capable of the reſt. For this Reaſon, thoſe who are not capacitated for the Procreation of Children, may Marry, becauſe they are capable of anſwering another end, for which Marriage was Ordain'd. Now our Adverſaries cannot Prove, that *Baptiſm* is a *ſtrict Inſtitution*, becauſe it ſucceeded in the room of *Circumciſion*, which was an *Inſtitution of Latitude*; and becauſe our Saviour was Baptiz'd, who was leſs capable of *Baptiſm*, than Infants poſſibly can be. For *John* Baptiz'd with the *Baptiſm* of Repentance, and thereby Seal'd unto the People the Remiſſion of their Sins. Now our Saviour was without ſin, and yet he was Baptiz'd; which ſhews, that a Man who is capable of ſome ends of *Baptiſm*, may be Baptiz'd, tho' he is not capable of the reſt.

Secondly, 'Tis reflecting upon the Wiſdom of God, becauſe God Commanded young Babes to be Circumcis'd, tho' all the ends of Circumciſion cou'd

not

not be anſwer'd by them. For, ſince there lies the ſame objection againſt *Infant-circumciſion* as againſt *Infant-baptiſm*, therefore thoſe Men who argue thus againſt *Infant-baptiſm*, do reproach the Divine Wiſdom, which injoin'd *Infant-circumciſion*.

Children are capable of all the ends of Baptiſm, as it is a Sign, to aſſure us of God's favour, and to conſign to us the Benefits of the Covenant of Grace. They may be made Members of a Church, and adopted Heirs of Eternal Life; as well as they may be made Members of a Family, and adopted Heirs of a Temporal Eſtate. And if they are capable of the Benefits and Privileges of Chriſtianity, why ſhou'd not the ſign of thoſe Benefits and Privileges be apply'd to them? Suppoſe a Prince ſhou'd ſend for an attainted Traytor's *Child*, and in the preſence of ſeveral Perſons Aſſembled for that purpoſe, ſhou'd ſay, *You know the blood of this Child is attainted by his Father's Treaſon; by Law he has forfeited all Right to his Anceſtors Eſtate and Titles, and is quite undone, tho' he be not ſenſible of his wretched condition. My Bowels of compaſſion yern upon him, and here I reſtore him to his Blood and Inheritance, to which hence forward he ſhall have as much Right, as if the Family had never been attainted. I juſtify him freely, and declare my ſelf reconcil'd to him; and that no ſpot or imputation may hereafter lie upon him, I here before you all waſh him with pure Water, to ſignify that he is cleans'd from his original attainder and corruption of Blood, and that he is as fully reſtor'd to his Birth-right, as if he had never been attainted.* Suppoſe, I ſay, this were done for a poor attainted Infant; cou'd any Man ſay, the action was inſignificant and invalid, becauſe that Child knew nothing of it? Or that he was incapable of the ſign, when he was capable of being

ing waſh'd from the attainder, which was the chief thing ſignify'd thereby?

Beſides, tho' *Abraham* believ'd, and ſolemnly profeſs'd his Faith before he was Circumcis'd; yet *Iſaac* was Circumcis'd, and enter'd into the Covenant with God, before he was able to underſtand what the condition of the Covenant was. And will any Man ſay he was Circumcis'd in vain, or that God commanded a fooliſh thing; tho' he was under the very ſame incapacity as to the ends of Circumciſion, that Infants now are as to the ends of Baptiſm?

If it be ſaid, that Circumciſion was more proper for Infants than Baptiſm, becauſe it left a Mark in the Fleſh, to inſtruct them what was done in their infancy, which *Baptiſm* does not; I anſwer, 1. That even the Mark of Circumciſion was as inſignificant during the non-age of the Child, as *Baptiſm* is to Chriſtian Infants: neither afterwards could he tell what the meaning of that Character was, but by the inſtruction of others. And therefore according to their way of reaſoning againſt *Infant-Baptiſm*, it ought to have been deferr'd till the full years of diſcretion, when the Circumcis'd perſon might have underſtood the Spiritual ſignification thereof. 2. Allowing that Circumciſion was more proper for Infants than *Baptiſm*, yet we muſt conſider that the *Jews* knew very well, that *Baptiſm* left no Mark upon the perſon. And therefore thoſe who argue againſt *Infant-Baptiſm*, muſt condemn the *Jewiſh* Church, which for many Ages Baptiz'd Infants and minor Proſelytes into the Covenant, as well as actual Believers, and yet were never reprov'd for it by any Prophet; which we may preſume they would have been, had baptiſmal initiation of Infants into the Covenant

Covenant been ſo abſurd, inſignificant, and abuſive a practice, as the Profeſſors againſt *Infant-Baptiſm* pretend it is.

II. I am to ſhew, that *Infants are not excluded from Baptiſm by Chriſt.* That he never excluded them by any expreſs prohibition, the *Anabaptiſts* themſelves do grant, becauſe there is no ſuch prohibition to be found in the New Teſtament: but then they pretend, that it was *Chriſt*'s intention, that none but grown perſons ſhou'd be Baptiz'd, becauſe the Goſpel requires, that perſons to be Baptiz'd ſhou'd, 1. be *Taught*, *Matth.* 28. 29. 2. *Believe*, *Mark* 16. 16. 3. *Repent*, *Acts* 2. 38. But thoſe and the like Texts do no more prove, that none but grown perſons ought to be Baptiz'd, than the Apoſtle's words, 2 *Theſſ.* 3. 10. do prove, that none but grown perſons ought to eat. For he requires that *if any wou'd not work, neither ſhou'd he eat*; now none but grown perſons can work, and therefore by this way of arguing none but grown perſons ought to eat. Again, ſuppoſe there were a Plague in any Country, and God ſhou'd miraculouſly call 11 or 12 Men, and give them a Medicine againſt this Plague, and ſay; *Go into ſuch a Country, and call the People of it together, and Teach them the Vertues of this Medicine, and aſſure them, that he that believeth and taketh it from you, ſhall live, but he that believeth not ſhall die.* Now ſince Children are capable of the Medicine, tho' they are ignorant of the Benefits of it; wou'd any Man conclude, that it was God's intention, that none but grown perſons ſhou'd receive it, becauſe *they only cou'd be call'd together, and be taught the Vertues of it, and believe or disbelieve them that brought it?* No certainly. Wherefore, ſeeing Children, as I have prov'd, are capable of the Benefits

of *Baptiſm*; and the *Apoſtles*, who were ſent to Baptize all Nations, knew them to be capable of it, and to have receiv'd both *Circumciſion* and *Baptiſm* in the *Jewiſh* Church: how ſhou'd it be thought, but that it was *Chriſt*'s intention, that Children as well as grown perſons ſhou'd be Baptiz'd?

Shou'd God, in the daies of *David*, have order'd ſome Prophets to go and Preach the Law to every Creature, ſaying, *He that believeth, and is Circumcis'd and Baptiz'd, ſhall be ſav'd, but he that believeth not ſhall be damn'd*; wou'd thoſe Prophets have Circumcis'd and Baptiz'd only grown perſons, contrary to the practice of the *Jewiſh* Church? Or if in a ſhort Hiſtory of their Miſſion we ſhou'd have read, that they Circumcis'd and Baptiz'd as many Proſelytes, as gladly receiv'd their word; wou'd this have prov'd, that they did not alſo Circumciſe and Baptize the Infants of thoſe believing Proſelytes, according to the Laws and Uſages of their Mother-Church? Or ſhou'd God bid 12 Men, of a Church that had always practis'd *Infant-Baptiſm*, go and Preach the Goſpel in the *Indies*, ſaying, *He that believeth and is Baptiz'd, ſhall be ſav'd*; wou'd thoſe Men, that were bred up to the practice of *Infant-Baptiſm*, think it was God's intention, that *Baptiſm* ſhou'd be deny'd to Infants? No certainly; and therefore by parity of Reaſon, the Apoſtles cou'd not ſo underſtand their Commiſſion, as to exclude Infants from *Baptiſm*.

Now ſince our Saviour has not, either expreſly or otherwiſe, excluded Infants from Baptiſm, certainly his Command to Baptize all Nations, do's comprehend Infants as well as Men. For the Apoſtles liv'd under a diſpenſation, where Infants were initiated both by *Circumciſion* and *Baptiſm* into the Church;

Church; and unleſs they had been inſtructed to the contrary, they muſt naturally underſtand their Commiſſion of Baptizing to have extended unto Infants, as well as actual Believers.

Our Adverſaries indeed put the greateſt ſtreſs upon theſe words of our Saviour, *Mark* 16. 16. *He that believeth and is Baptiz'd, ſhall be ſav'd:* but if they wou'd well conſider the next words, they wou'd find, that Infants are not at all concern'd in them; becauſe it follows, *but he that believeth not, ſhall be damn'd.* The ſame want of Faith, which here excludes from *Baptiſm*, excludes alſo from Salvation: and therefore it cannot be underſtood of Infants, unleſs they will ſay, that the ſame incapacity of believing which excludes them from *Baptiſm*, excludes them from Salvation too. Wherefore 'tis plain, that the believing or not believing in that Text, is only to be underſtood of ſuch as are in a capacity of hearing and believing the Goſpel, that is, of grown perſons; juſt as the words, *John* 3. 36. *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath Everlaſting Life; and he that believeth not, ſhall not ſee Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him.*

But they urge alſo, that *Baptiſm* is *unprofitable* for Infants, becauſe *putting away the filth of the Fleſh*, which is all that Infants are capable of, ſignifies nothing; but only *the anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God*, of which, ſay they, Infants are wholly uncapable. To this I anſwer, that another Apoſtle tells us, that external *Circumciſion*, which is all that infants are capable of, *profiteth nothing without keeping the Law*, which Infants cou'd not keep: but that the inward *Circumciſion of the Heart and in the Spirit, was the true Circumciſion*, and yet Infants are uncapable of it. So that their way

of arguing proves nothing, becauſe it ſtretches the words of the Apoſtles beyond their juſt meaning; which was to let both *Jews* and *Chriſtians* know, (not that their Infants were unprofitably Circumcis'd or Baptiz'd, but) that there was no reſting in external *Circumciſion* or Baptiſm.

But farther, had not the Church been alwaies in poſſeſſion of this practice, or cou'd any time be ſhew'd on this ſide the Apoſtles, when it began; nay cou'd it be prov'd that any one Church in the World did not *Baptize Infants*, or that any conſiderable number of Men (otherwiſe Orthodox) did decline the *Baptizing* of them upon the ſame principles that theſe Men do now: then I ſhou'd ſuſpect, that their arguments are better than they really are, and that *Infant-Baptiſm* might poſſibly be a deviation from the Rule of *Chriſt*. But ſince it is ſo Univerſal and Ancient a practice, that there never was any Church, Ancient or Modern, which did not practiſe it; it can be nothing leſs than an Apoſtolical practice and tradition.

If it be ſaid, that *Falſe* Apoſtles and *Falſe* Teachers brought in *Infant-Baptiſm* in the very firſt Ages; I wou'd fain know, how it came to paſs that the very Companions and Contemporaries of the Apoſtles, and the Ancient Saints and Martyrs, who wrote againſt other Hereſies, paſs'd it over in ſilence, tho' we are ſure from *Irenæus* and *Tertullian*, that it was (*a*) practis'd in thoſe early times. 'Tis impoſſible, that they ſhou'd all conſent in ſuch a dangerous Errour, or that they ſhou'd all peaceably and tamely ſubmit to it without oppoſition,

(*a*) See *Suicerus* in the words ἀναγέννησις and παλιγγενεσία, *Hammond* on *Matth.* 19. 28. *John* 3. 5. *Selden* De Jure, *lib.* 2. *c.* 4. *Voſſius* De Baptiſmo. *p.* 181.

or

or that ſuch an alteration ſhou'd be made without obſervation, no body can tell how or when. Certainly thoſe places of the *New Teſtament*, which require a profeſſion of Faith and Repentance *in grown Perſons* before *Baptiſm*, were underſtood by the ancient Fathers: and yet they never concluded from thence, that Infants ought not to be Baptiz'd. But if the *Scriptures* were doubtful in the caſe, I appeal to any Man, whether the harmonious practice of the ancient Churches, and the undivided conſent of the Apoſtolical Fathers, be not the beſt interpreters of them. Let any modeſt Perſon judge, whether it be more likely, that ſo many famous Saints and Martyrs, ſo near the Apoſtles times, ſhou'd conſpire in the practice of Mock-Baptiſm, and of making ſo many Millions of Mock-Chriſtians; or that a little Sect ſhou'd be in a grievous Errour. The brevity which I deſign, will not permit me to recite the Authorities of the ancients, and therefore I refer the Reader to *Caſſander*, and *Voſſius* De Baptiſm. Diſp. 14. only I deſire him to conſider the following particulars.

1. That 'tis hard to imagine, that God ſhou'd ſuffer his Church to fall into ſuch a dangerous practice, as our Adverſaries think *Infant-Baptiſm* to be, which wou'd in time. Unchurch it; and that even *while Miracles were yet extant in the Church, and he bare them witneſs with ſigns and wonders and divers gifts of the Holy Ghoſt.* And yet 'tis plain, that *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, *Origen* and *Cyprian*, who are witneſſes of *Infant-Baptiſm* in thoſe daies, do aſſure (*b*) us, that Mi-

(*b*) See *Irenæus* Adv. Hær. l. 2. c. 56, 57. *Tertull.* Apol. *and* ad Scapul. *Origen* adv. Celſum, *Camb.* p. 34, 62, 80, 124, 127, 334, 376. *Cyprian* ad Donat. *and* ad Magn. *and* ad Demetrian. *p.* 202. *Edit. Rigalt.*

racles then not Extraordinary in the Church.

2. If *Infant-Baptiſm* was not an Apoſtolical Tradition, how came the (*c*) *Pelagians* not to reject it for an innovation, when the Orthodox us'd it as an argument againſt them, that Infants were guilty of Original ſin? But they were ſo far from doing this, that they practis'd it themſelves, and own'd it as *neceſſary for Childrens obtaining the Kingdom of Heaven*, tho' they deny'd that they were Baptiz'd for the remiſſion of Original ſin.

3. If *Infant-baptiſm* be not an Apoſtolical Tradition, how came all Churches (*d*) whatſoever, tho' they held no correſpondence, but were original plantations of the Apoſtles, to practiſe it? One may eaſily imagine, that God might ſuffer all Churches to fall into the harmleſs practice of *Infant-Communion*; or that the Fathers of the Church might comply with the Religious fondneſs of the People in bringing their Children to the Lord's Supper, as we do with bringing them to Prayers: but that God ſhou'd let them all (not preſerving one for a Monument of Apoſtolical Purity) fall into a practice, which deſtroys the being of the Church, is a thouſand times more incredible, than that the Apoſtles, without a prohibition from Chriſt to the contrary, ſhou'd *Baptize Infants* according to the practice of the *Jewiſh* Church.

4. Wou'd not the *Jewiſh* Chriſtians, who were offended at the neglect of Circumciſion, have been

(*c*) See *Voſſ.* Hiſt. Pelag. *lib.* 2. *p.* 2. *Id.* de Baptiſ. *Diſp.* 13. *Theſ.* 18. *and Diſp.* 14. *Theſ.* 4. *Caſſand.* Præf. ad Duc. Jul. *p.* 670. *and* Teſtim. vet. de Bapt. parv. *p.* 687. (*d*) See *Brerewood's* Enquir. *c.* 20. 23. *Caſſand.* Expoſ. de Auctor. Conſult. Bapt Inf. *p.* 692. *Oſor.* l. 3. de Rebus geſt. Eman. *cit. a* Voſſ. *Diſp.* 14. de Bapt.

much

much more offended, if the Apoſtles had excluded their Children from Baptiſm, as the Children of Unbelievers, and refus'd to Initiate them under the *New Teſtament*, as they had alwaies been under the *Old?* Wherefore, ſince among their many complaints upon the alteration of the *Jewiſh* Cuſtoms, we never read that they complain'd of their Childrens being excluded from Baptiſm: we may better argue, that the Apoſtles Baptiz'd their Children; than we may conclude from the want of an expreſs example of *Infant-Baptiſm*, that they did not Baptize them.

III. I am to prove, that *'tis unlawful to ſeparate from a Church, which appoints Infant-Baptiſm.* Now it appears from what I have already ſaid, that *Infant-Baptiſm* is a lawful thing, and therefore 'tis a ſin to ſeparate from that Church which commands it; becauſe the Church has authority to Ordain that, which may be done without ſin.

But farther, *Infant-Baptiſm* is not only lawful, but highly requiſite alſo. For purgation by Water and the Spirit ſeem equally neceſſary, becauſe *Except a Man be born again of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, John 3. 5. And 'tis reaſonable to think, that Children are capable of entring into Covenant, becauſe they are declar'd capable of *the Kingdom of God*, Mark 10. 14. Nay we may juſtly conclude, that Children were Baptiz'd upon the Converſion of their Parents, after the Cuſtom of the *Jewiſh* Church, becauſe the Apoſtles Baptiz'd whole houſholds, *Acts* 16. 15, 33. 1 *Cor.* 1. 16. For 'tis probable, that the federal holineſs of Believers Children makes them candidates for Baptiſm, and gives them a right to it; becauſe the

Children of Believers are call'd *Holy*, 1 *Cor.* 7. 14. To which I may add other Texts, *Pſal.* 5. 5. *Rom.* 3. 23, 24. *Joh.* 3. 5, 6. 2 *Cor.* 15. 21, 22. *and* 5. 14, 15. which have been alledg'd by the ancients, both before and after the *Pelagian* Controverſy, to prove the *Baptiſm* of *Infants* neceſſary to waſh away their original ſin, which makes them obnoxious to eternal death. *See* Voſſ. *Hiſt. Pelag. p.* 1. *Theſ.* 6. *p.* 2. *l.* 2. I ſay, it may be fairly concluded from theſe Texts, that *Infant-Baptiſm* is requiſite: but then theſe Texts in conjunction with the practice of the ancient Church do demonſtrate that 'tis requiſite; becauſe the Church in the next Age to the Apoſtles practis'd *Infant-Baptiſm*, as an Apoſtolical tradition, and by conſequence, as an inſtitution of Chriſt.

I do not ſay, that Baptiſm is indiſpenſably neceſſary to the Salvation of Infants, ſo that a Child dying unbaptiz'd thro' the careleſneſs or ſuperſtition of the Parents, or thro' their miſtaken belief of the unlawfulneſs of *Infant-Baptiſm*, is infallibly damn'd: but I affirm, that *Infant-Baptiſm* is in any wiſe to be retain'd in the Church, as being moſt agreeable to the *Scripture*, and the Apoſtolical practice, and the inſtitution of Chriſt. And if Baptiſm be not only lawful but ſo highly requiſite, as it appears to be; then certainly 'tis unlawful to ſeparate from that Church which injoins it.

IV. In the next place I ſhall ſhew, that *'tis the duty of Chriſtian Parents to bring their Children to Baptiſm*; and in doing this I muſt proceed, as I did in the foregoing particular. Since Infants are not uncapable of Baptiſm, nor excluded from it by Chriſt; nay, ſince there are good reaſons to preſume, that Chriſt at leaſt allow'd them Baptiſm as well as grown perſons: therefore the command of the Church makes it the People's duty to bring

their

their Children to Baptiſm, becauſe 'tis lawful ſo to do.

But farther, *Infant-Baptiſm* is highly expedient alſo. For, 1. it is very beneficial to the Infants, who are thereby ſolemnly conſecrated to God, and made members of Chriſt's Myſtical Body the Church. Beſides, they being by Nature Children of Wrath, are by Baptiſm made the Children of Grace, and receive a right to eternal Life. I cannot deny, but they may be ſav'd without Baptiſm by the uncovenanted Mercy of God: but then the hopes of God's mercy in extraordinary caſes, ought not to make us leſs regardful of his ſure, ordinary, and covenanted Mercies, and the appointed Means to which they are annex'd. Nay, Infants do by Baptiſm acquire a preſent right unto all the Promiſes of the Goſpel, and particularly to the promiſes of the Spirit's aſſiſtance, which they ſhall certainly receive, as ſoon and as faſt, as their natural incapacity removes.

Now, ſince theſe are the benefits of Baptiſm, and ſince Infants are capable of them; let any impartial Man judge, whether it is more for their benefit, that they ſhou'd receive them by being Baptiz'd in their infancy, or ſtay for them till they come to years of diſcretion. Is it better for a Child that has the *Evil*, to be touch'd for it while he is a Child, or to wait till he is of ſufficient Age to be ſenſible of the benefit? Or is it beſt for a Traytor's Child to be preſently reſtor'd to his Blood and Eſtate, and his Prince's Favour, or to be kept in a mere capacity of being reſtor'd, till he is a man?

I muſt add, that Baptiſm laies ſuch an early pre-engagement upon Children, as without the higheſt baſeneſs and ingratitude they cannot after-

wards retract. For there is no perſon of common Ingenuity, Hónour or Conſcience, but will think himſelf bound to ſtand to the Obligation which he contracted in his Infancy; when he was ſo graciouſly admitted to ſo many bleſſings and privileges, before he cou'd underſtand his own good, or do any thing himſelf towards the obtaining of them. And therefore the Wiſdom of the Church is highly to be applauded, for bringing them under ſuch a beneficial pre-engagement, and not leaving them to their own liberty at ſuch years, when Fleſh and Blood wou'd be apt to find out ſo many ſhifts and excuſes, and make them regret to be Baptiz'd.

2. *Infant-Baptiſm* is very Expedient, becauſe it conduces much to the Well-being and Edification of the Church, in preventing thoſe ſcandalous and ſhameful delays of Baptiſm, which grown Perſons wou'd be apt to make in theſe, as they did in former times to the great prejudice of Chriſtianity.

Since therefore *Infant-Baptiſm* is not only Lawful and commanded by the Church, but moſt Expedient in it ſelf, and moſt agreeable to the practice of the Apoſtles and Primitive Chriſtians, and to the Will of *Chriſt*; it muſt needs be concluded, that there lies the ſame obligation upon Parents to deſire Baptiſm for their Children, as there do's upon grown Perſons to deſire it for themſelves. For what Authority ſoever exacts any thing concerning Children or Perſons under the years of diſcretion, laies at leaſt an implicit obligation upon Parents, to ſee that it be perform'd. For, if in the time of a general contagion, the Supreme Power ſhou'd Command, that all Men, Women and Children, ſhou'd every Morning take ſuch an Antidote; that Command wou'd oblige Parents to give it to their

their Children, as well as to take it themſelves. Juſt ſo the Ordinance of Baptiſm being intended for Children as well as grown Perſons, it muſt needs oblige the Parents to bring them to it.

What I have here ſaid about the obligation, which lies upon Parents to bring their Children to *Baptiſm*, concerns all *Guardians*, &c. to whoſe care Children are committed. And if any ask, *at what time they are bound to bring them to Baptiſm?* I anſwer, *at any time*; for the Goſpel indulges a diſcretional latitude, but forbids the wilful neglect, and all unreaſonable and needleſs delays thereof.

V. As to *Communion with Believers, who were Baptiz'd in their Infancy*, 'tis certainly Lawful, and has ever been thought ſo; nay 'tis an exceeding great ſin to refuſe Communion with them, becauſe that wou'd be a diſowning thoſe to be Members of *Chriſt*'s Body, whom he owns to be ſuch.

Nothing now remains, but that I take off two objections. *Firſt*, 'Tis ſaid that *Infant-Communion* may be practis'd, as well as *Infant-Baptiſm*. But I anſwer, 1. There is not equal Evidence for the Practice of *Infant-Communion*; becauſe St. *Cyprian* is the firſt Author which they can produce for it, and then the Author of the *Eccleſiaſtical Hierarchy*, and *Cyril* of *Jeruſalem*, mention it towards the latter end of the *Fourth Century*, and St. *Auſtin* in the *Fifth*: whereas for *Infant-Baptiſm* we have the Authority of St. *Cyprian* and a whole Council of Fathers, over which he Preſided, of *Origen*, *Tertullian*, *Irenæus*, St. *Jerom*, St. *Ambroſe*, St. *Chryſoſtom*, St. *Athanaſius*, *Gregory Nazianzen*, and the *Third* Council of *Carthage*, who all ſpeak of it as a thing generally practis'd, and moſt of them, as of a thing which *ought to be practis'd* in the Church.

I may

I may add, that none of the *Four* Teſtimonies for *Infant-Communion* ſpeak of it, as of an Apoſtolical Tradition, as *Origen* do's of *Infant-Baptiſm*. 2. There is not equal Reaſon for the Practice of it. For Perſons of all Ages are capable of Baptiſm: but the *Holy Euchariſt* is *the Sacrament of Perfection*, inſtituted for the remembrance of *Chriſt*'s Death and Paſſion; which being an act of great Knowledge and Piety, Children are not capable to perform. Nor is there an equal concurrence of Tradition, or the Authority of ſo many Texts of Scripture for *Infant-Communion*; it being grounded only upon *John* 6. 53. *Except ye eat the Fleſh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, ye have no life in you.* Now 'tis doubtful whether this be meant of the *Euchariſt* or no, becauſe it was not as yet inſtituted: but if it be ſo to be underſtood, yet the ſence of it ought to be regulated by the chief end of its Inſtitution, *Do this in remembrance of me.* Nay, the Weſtern Church, diſcerning the Miſtake upon which *Infant-Communion* was grounded, have long ſince laid it aſide, tho' they ſtill continue the practice of *Infant-Baptiſm*.

But in truth, the practice of *Infant-Communion* is ſo far from prejudicing the Cauſe of *Infant-Baptiſm*, that it mightily confirms it; becauſe none were, or cou'd be admitted to partake of the Holy Communion, till they were *validly* Baptiz'd. And therefore the practice of *Infant-Communion* fully proves, that all the Churches, wherein it ever was, or ſtill (*e*) is practis'd, were of opinion, that the *Baptiſm* of Infants is as *Valid* and *Lawful*, as that of grown Perſons.

(*e*) *As in the* Greek, Ruſſian, *and* Abyſſin *Churches, and among the Chriſtians of St.* Thomas *in the* Indies.

Secondly

Secondly, 'tis objected, that Children who have not the uſe of Reaſon, cannot know what a *Covenant means*, and therefore they cannot contract and ſtipulate; tho' St. *Peter* ſays, *the Baptiſm which ſaveth us, muſt have the Anſwer, or Reſtipulation of a good Conſcience towards God.* To this I Anſwer, 1. That this Objection is as ſtrong againſt *Infant-Circumciſion*, as againſt *Infant-Baptiſm*. 2. That God was pleas'd to Seal the Covenant of Grace unto Circumcis'd Infants upon an *implicite* and *imputative* ſort of ſtipulation, which at years of underſtanding they were bound to own; becauſe if they renounc'd it, the Covenant was as void, as if it had never been made. And therefore an *implicite* ſtipulation is ſufficient for the *Baptiſm* of Infants; and St. *Peter*, 'tis likely, had not reſpect to all *Baptiſm*, or *Baptiſm* in general, but only to the *Baptiſm* of adult Proſelytes, whom the Miniſter us'd to *interrogate* at the time of *Baptiſm*, much after the ſame manner as we *interrogate* adult Proſelytes now. But it is plain that *Tertullian* (*f*) makes mention of *Sponſors* or *Sureties* for Children at Baptiſm; and 'tis very probable, that the Apoſtles made *Parents*, &c. *ſtipulate* in the name of their (*g*) Minors, when they Baptiz'd them, as the *Jews* were wont to do; and tis certain, that our Saviour ſpeaks of Children, that *Believe in him*, *Matth.* 18. 6. And therefore St. *Peter* might alſo probably allude to all *Baptiſm*, becauſe Children might be Anſwer'd for by other Perſons.

Thus, I hope, I have ſufficiently juſtify'd the practice of *Infant-Baptiſm*, and ſhewn, that it is by no means a ſufficient excuſe for ſeparation from us.

(*f*) De *Baptiſm.* cap. 18. (*g*) *See* Selden *de Synedr.* lib. 1. cap. 3.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Objections againſt our Form of Baptiſm, and particularly that of the ſign of the Croſs, Anſwer'd.

I Proceed now to conſider the Objections againſt our Form of Baptiſm.

I. It is ſaid, that *all Baptiz'd Infants are ſuppos'd to be regenerated, of which,* ſome think, *we cannot be certain.* But ſince they are *Baptiz'd into Chriſt's Body,* 1 Cor. 12. 13. and *into Chriſt,* and *have put on Chriſt,* Gal. 3. 27. and conſequently are *new Creatures,* 2 Cor. 5. 17. ſince, I ſay, they are *Baptiz'd for the Remiſſion of ſins,* Acts 2. 38. and ſince *Baptiſm* is call'd *the Waſhing of regeneration,* Tit. 3. 5. therefore the *Scripture,* as well as our Church, ſuppoſes them to be regenerated; unleſs the Ordinances and Promiſes of God are of none effect towards them.

II. 'Tis objected, that *Godfathers and Godmothers have no Authority to Covenant or act in their names.* To which I anſwer, 1. That the Sureties are procur'd by the *Parents*; and therefore, ſince 'tis granted that the *Parents* may act in behalf of the Infant, the Sureties have all that Authority which the *Parents* can give them. 2. The Church do's hereby take great ſecurity, that the Infant ſhall be religiouſly brought up: inaſmuch as, beſides their *Parents,* an obligation is laid upon others alſo to take care of it. If the *Parents* ſhou'd die or be negligent, the Sureties are engaged to admoniſh the Child, and have greater authority and better advantages of doing ſo, than other Perſons. And in this

this Age, when the Duty of Chriſtian reproof is ſo generally omitted, 'twere well if the defect were this way a little ſupply'd: but 'tis by no means fit, that the opportunity thereof, and obligation thereto ſhou'd be taken away. If it be ſaid, this is ſeldom practis'd; I anſwer, that the goodneſs of a Rule is to be judg'd of by the good that is done where 'tis kept, and not where 'tis broken. And if the *Diſſenters* have nothing to ſay, but that 'tis neglected; they may remove this objection themſelves, by returning to the Church and increaſing the number of thoſe that obſerve it. Thus they ſhall have the benefit of the order of the Church, and the Church the benefit of their Examples.

As for the *Interrogatories* put to the Sureties, and their *Anſwers*, they are a Solemn Declaration of what *Baptiſm* obliges us to; and that Infants do ſtand engag'd to perform it, when they come to Age. This is the known meaning of the Contract; and therefore I ſee not, why it ſhou'd be ſaid to be *liable to miſunderſtanding*.

III. But that which is moſt diſlik'd, is the *Croſs in Baptiſm*, againſt which 'tis objected, 1. That the ſign of the *Croſs* has been ſo notoriouſly abus'd by the *Papiſts*, that our retaining of it makes us partakers of their Superſtitions and Idolatry. 2. That it ſeems a new Sacrament, and therefore is an invaſion of *Chriſt*'s right, who alone may inſtitute Sacraments.

As to the *Firſt* pretence, tho' I readily acknowledge that the *Croſs* has been notoriouſly abus'd by the *Papiſts*, yet this do's not prove our retaining of it to be unlawful, if we conſider *Three* things.

1. That the uſe of this ſign was common in the primitive times, and is more Ancient, than any of thoſe

thoſe Corruptions, for which we differ from the *Papiſts*. *Tertullian (a)* ſpeaks of it, as of a practice which *Tradition had introduc'd, Cuſtom had confirm'd, and the Believers faith had obſerv'd and maintain'd:* which words, together with his frequent and familiar mention of it, make it very improbable, that he receiv'd it from the *Montaniſts*. Fourty years after him, and about 200 after *Chriſt*, *Origen (b)* mentions thoſe, who at their Baptiſm *were ſign'd with this ſign:* and about 100 years after, St. *Baſil (c)* gives this uſage the Venerable Title of *an Eccleſiaſtical conſtitution*, or fixt Law of the Church, *that had prevail'd from the Apoſtles daies, that thoſe who believe in the Name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, ſhould be ſign'd with the ſign of the* Croſs.

But of all the Fathers, St. *Cyprian* who was before St. *Baſil* and very near (if not contemporary with) *Tertullian* himſelf, not only ſpeaks very familiarly of the uſe of this ſign, but has ſome expreſſions that wou'd now ſeem very harſh and unwarrantable: and yet the authority of this Father has ſav'd him from being queſtion'd about it. He *(d)* tells us, that *they are ſign'd in the forehead with the Croſs, who are thought worthy of the Lord*; that *Baptiſm is ſanctify'd by the Croſs*; and that *it compleats every Sacrament.* The great the antiquity of this uſage is manifeſt; nay, the Fathers frequently uſe *being ſign'd in the forehead* for *being Baptiz'd.*

I ſhall not inſtance in St. *Cyril*, St. *Ambroſe* and St. *Auſtin*, who ſprinkle their writings with the common mention of this Ceremony, and often-

(*a* De Coron. Mil. (*b*) Hom. 2. in Pſal. 38. (*c*) De Spir. S. c. 27. (*d*) See *Cyprian.* De Lapſ. *p.* 169. adv. *Demet.* p. 203. de Unit. p. 175.

times

times frame arguments for a good Life, from this very ſign upon their foreheads. Only I ſhall add this remark; that the firſt Chriſtian Emperour *Conſtantine the Great*, had his directions probably from Heaven it ſelf, to make this ſign the great Banner in his Wars, with this encouragement, that *by this he ſhou'd overcome.* That this *Dream* or *Viſion* was from Heaven, and a thing of great reality, is evident from the ſucceſs of that Prince's Army under it: and we cannot ſuppoſe, that our Bleſſed Lord wou'd, by ſo immediate a revelation, countenance ſuch a Rite as this, already us'd in the Church, if he had reſented it before as ſuperſtitious or any way unwarrantable. I may add, that we ought not to be too petulant againſt that, which the *Holy Spirit* has ſometimes ſignaliz'd by very renown'd Miracles; as thoſe that conſult the Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtories of the beſt Authority, cannot but be convinc'd: and that thoſe conceits of the Fathers concerning this ſign, which perhaps may be too fanciful, do confirm the ancient reception of it into the Primitive Church.

If it be ſaid, that the antient Chriſtians us'd this ſign, becauſe they liv'd amongſt *Jews* and *Heathens*, to teſtify to both, that they made the *Croſs* the Badge of their profeſſion, and wou'd not be aſham'd of it, tho' 'twas a *ſtumbling-block* to the one and *fooliſhneſs* to the other: whereas we have no ſuch occaſion for it, who do univerſally profeſs Chriſtianity; I Anſwer, 1. That this Objection ſuppoſes the ſign to be lawful, and that it may be us'd upon weighty Reaſons; and ſurely then the command of Authority may juſtify the practice of it. 2. That we have as juſt reaſon to uſe it as the Primitive Chriſtians, becauſe of the blaſphemous Contempt that is generally caſt upon

the whole Scheme of Chriſtianity, particularly the Merits of our Saviour's *Croſs* and Paſſion, by the pretended Wits of our Age. So that St. *Cyprian's* (*e*) words are now pertinent, *Arm your Foreheads, that the Seal of God may be kept ſafe*; as if he ſhou'd have ſaid, *Remember the Badge you took upon you in Baptiſm, and ſo long as you have that upon your Foreheads, never be aſham'd or laugh'd out of countenance as to the Memory of our Saviour's love, and the foundation of your hopes laid in his Death and Paſſion.*

I grant indeed, that the uſe of the Croſs is an *indifferent Ceremony*, and that Baptiſm is, as our Church declares, compleat without it: but what I contend for, is fully prov'd, *viz.* that the *Croſs* was us'd in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity; from whence it follows, that tho' 'tis not neceſſary, yet 'tis warrantable.

2. Our uſe of this ſign is not in the leaſt like the *Popiſh* uſe of it. For, 1. we admit of no viſible Crucifixes; nor has any of our Writers venturd to ſay (*f*) with Mr. *Baxter*, that *a Crucifix well befitteth the imagination and mind of a Believer*; and that *it is not unlawful to make an image* (of a Crucifix) *to be an Obiect or* Medium *of our conſideration, exciting our minds to worſhip God.* The ſence of our Church is truly expreſt by Mr. *Hooker*, who (*g*) ſays, That *between the Croſs which* Superſtition *honoureth as Chriſt, and that Ceremony of the Croſs which ſerveth only for a ſign of remembrance, there is as plain and great a difference, as between thoſe Brazen Images which* Solomon *made to bear up the Ciſtern of the Temple, and that which*

(*e*) *Epiſt.* 56. ad Thibar. (*f*) Chriſtian Direct. Eccleſ. Caſ. p. 113. p. 875, 876. (*g*) Eccleſ. Pol. l. 5. p. 348.

the

the Iſraelites *in the Wilderneſs did adore.* Ours is a mere tranſient ſign, which abides not ſo long as to be capable of becoming an *Object* or *Medium of worſhip*, any more than any words we uſe in worſhip may do. 2. Our uſe even of this tranſient ſign is nothing like the *Popiſh* uſe of it. For the *Papiſts* uſe it upon all occaſions; and at Baptiſm they uſe it much oftner, and ſo differently from our way, that 'tis not us'd at the ſame time and with the ſame words that we uſe it with. This is evident from the *Roman Ritual.*

3. Tho' the *Church* of *Rome* has notoriouſly abus'd this ſign, yet 'tis not unlawful for us to continue the uſe of it, as I ſhall fully prove in the *Eighth Chapter.*

As to the *Second* pretence, that the ſign of the *Croſs* is a new Sacrament, I anſwer, that we all agree, that *a Sacrament is an outward and viſible ſign of an inward and Spiritual Grace given to us, Ordain'd by Chriſt himſelf, as a means whereby we receive the ſame, and as a Pledge to aſſure us thereof.* And therefore, ſince we never ſuppos'd, that the uſe of the *Croſs* in Baptiſm cou'd confer Grace, nor have ever made the leaſt pretence to any Divine appointment for it; we ought not to be charg'd as introducing a *New Sacrament.*

If it be ſaid, that we make the *Croſs* a ſign betokening our Faith and Chriſtian Courage, becauſe we apply it *in token that hereafter he ſhall not be aſham'd to confeſs the Faith of Chriſt Crucify'd*, &c. and that therefore we make it *an outward ſign of an inward and Spiritual Grace*; I anſwer, that we own it to be a ſignificant Ceremony, as all other Ceremonies are; for we do not account a Ceremony *innocent*, becauſe 'tis *inſigni-*

ficant and impertinent: but yet we deny it to be *an outward and viſible ſign of an inward and Spiritual Grace.* For our Ceremonies are not ſeals and aſſurances from God of his Grace to us, but hints and remembrances of ſome Obligation we are under with reſpect to him; and this kind of *ſignificant* Uſages has ever been taken up, without any imputation of *introducing a New Sacrament.*

For, 1. the *Jewiſh* Church chang'd the poſture of eating the Paſſover, from *Standing* to *Sitting* in token of their Reſt and Security in the Land of *Canaan.* There was alſo *an Altar of witneſs* rear'd on the other ſide of *Jordan*; and the *Synagogue-Worſhip, Rites of Marriage, Form of taking Oaths,* &c. were *ſignificant*; and yet they were all receiv'd in the pureſt times of the *Jewiſh* Church, and comply'd with by our Saviour himſelf 2. The *Chriſtian* Church of the firſt Ages us'd the ſame liberty, as appears by the cuſtoms of *the Holy Kiſs* and *the Feaſts of Charity. Tertullian, de Orat.* ſpeaks as if the public Service were imperfect, if it concluded not with the *Holy Kiſs*; which was us'd in token of the mutual Communion and Fellowſhip, that Chriſtians had with one another. The *Feaſts of Charity* alſo ſignify'd the mutual Love and Communion of Chriſtians, and the equal regard that God and our Saviour had towards all ſorts and conditions of Men, when they were all to eat freely together at one Common meal. I might further inſtance in the Ceremony of *inſufflation*, which was us'd as a ſign of *Breathing into them the good Spirit*; and the Baptiz'd Perſon's *ſtripping off his Garment* in token that he put off the Old Man; and the *trine immerſion*, at the Mention of each Perſon of the Trinity, to ſignify the Belief

lief of that great Article. Now all theſe things were anciently practis'd without any jealouſy of *invading the prerogative of Chriſt in inſtituting New Sacraments.* 3. All the Reformed Churches, nay the very *Diſſenters* themſelves, do uſe ſome Symbolical actions in their moſt Religious Solemnities. For, 1. Their giving to the Baptiz'd Infant a *New Name* ſeems to betoken its being made a *New Creature.* Nay the *Diſſenters* generally give it ſome Scripture-name, or one that betokens a particular grace; and this is an *outward and viſible ſign*, and this too ſometimes of an *inward and ſpiritual grace*; and yet they do not think it a *New Sacrament.* 2. The *Diſſenters* plead for *ſitting at the Lord's Supper*, becauſe 'tis a *Table-geſture*, and expreſſes *Fellowſhip with Chriſt*, &c. This is *an outward and viſible ſign of an inward and ſpiritual grace*; and yet 'tis not accounted an additional *Sacrament* to that of the Lord's Supper. 4. And *laſtly*, Suppoſe that an *Independent*, when he is admitted into their Church-Covenant, ſhou'd ſignify his aſſent by *holding up his hand*, or the like; this is *an outward and viſible ſign* of no leſs then *a new ſtate of life*, that is, of being made a Member of *Chriſt*'s Church, and being engaged to all the duties and inſtated in all the Privileges of it: and yet this was never charg'd upon them by the *Presbyterians*, as introducing a *New Sacrament.* Now from all theſe inſtances 'tis evident, how unreaſonable a thing it is, that our uſing the *ſign of the Croſs, in token that hereafter he* (the Infant) *ſhall not be aſham'd to confeſs the Faith of* Chriſt *crucify'd*, &c. ſhou'd be thought an adding of a New Sacrament of the *Croſs* to that of *Baptiſm.*

But 'tis objected, that our Convocation, *c.* 30. declares, That by the ſign of the *Croſs* the Infant

is *Dedicated*, &c. Now, ſay they, *Baptiſm* is it ſelf a Seal of *Dedication* to God, and therefore our *Dedicating* the Infant by our own invented way of the ſign of the *Croſs*, is adding a New Sacrament. To this I anſwer, that *Dedication* may properly ſignify a Confirmation of our firſt *Dedication* to God, and a Declaration of what the Church thinks of a Baptiz'd Perſon; and the ſign of the Croſs is the *Medium* of this Declaration. That this is the meaning of our Church, is evident, if we compare the *Office of Baptiſm* and the *Canon* together. Both the *Rubric* and *Canon* ſay, that *Baptiſm* is compleat without the ſign of the *Croſs*. It is expreſly ſaid, *We receive this Child into the Congregation of* Chriſt's *Flock, and* upon that *do ſign it with the Croſs*; So that the Child is declar'd to be *within the Congregation of* Chriſt's *Flock*, before 'tis ſign'd with the Croſs. Since therefore the Perſon is Dedicated in *Baptiſm*, and the *Baptiſm* is acknowledg'd compleat without, or before the ſign of the Croſs; we cannot be thought to *Dedicate* in *Baptiſm* and to *Dedicate* by the *Croſs* again: but the *Dedication* by the *Croſs* muſt be ſomething very diſtinct from the *Dedication* of *Baptiſm*; that is, the one is *the ſign of the Dedication*, and the other *the Dedication it ſelf*. So that this is plainly no other, than a Declaration the Church makes of what the Baptiz'd Perſon is admitted to, and what engagement he lies under. Which Declaration is therefore made in the name of the Church in the Plural number, *We receive this Child*, &c. *and do ſign him with the ſign of the Croſs*, &c. whereas in *Baptiſm*, the Miniſter alone, as the immediate Agent of *Chriſt*, pronounces in the ſingular number, *I Baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.*

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From what has been ſaid, I hope, it appears, that our Office of *Baptiſm* has nothing in it, that may in the leaſt juſtify a ſeparation from us.

CHAP. VII.

Objections againſt our Communion-Office, and particularly that of kneeling at the Sacrament, Anſwer'd.

THO' the Communion-Office, for the Gravity and Holineſs thereof, is preferr'd by the *Diſſenters* before all other Offices in the *Common-Prayer-Book*, yet it has not paſt free from exception. For,

I. 'Tis objected againſt it, that the Petition in the Prayer before Conſecration, *That our ſinful Bodies may be made clean by his body, and our Souls waſh'd by his moſt precious Blood,* implies that the Blood of *Chriſt* has greater efficacy than his Body, inaſmuch as the Soul is ſaid to be cleans'd by the Blood of Chriſt, and only the Body by Chriſt's Body. But I anſwer, that at the delivery of the Bread and Wine, the Prieſt ſaies, *The Body of our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, *which was given for thee, preſerve thy Body and Soul unto everlaſting Life*; and *The Blood of our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, *which was*, &c. And therefore 'tis plain, that our Church teaches, that the Sanctification and Salvation of our Souls and Bodies flow from the Body as well as the Blood of Chriſt. Nor do's the mentioning of one alone exclude the other; for the Apoſtle ſpeaks ſometimes of the Bread alone, 1 *Cor.* 10. 17. and ſometimes of the Wine alone, 1 *Cor.* 12. 13. and yet all Men muſt grant, that he meant both.

II. 'Tis ſaid, that Chriſt did not deliver the Elements into every Perſon's hands, with a Form of words recited to every one of them, as we do. But I anſwer, 1. That this do's not appear from *Chriſt*'s words; for the Evangeliſts may well be ſuppos'd to give a ſhort account of the Inſtitution, and then what might be particularly ſaid or done to every one, wou'd be ſufficiently related in being ſaid to be done or ſpoken to all. 2. Suppoſe that our practice do's vary from this circumſtance of the Inſtitution, it may be as eaſily defended as celebrating the Lord's Supper at Dinner-time, and not at Supper, which the *Diſſenters* themſelves do not ſcruple. 3. Our Saviour commanded his Diſciples, *Matth.* 28. 19. to Teach all Nations *Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.* But will any Man think, that when great numbers are to be Baptiz'd together, the Form of Baptizing *in the Name of the Father*, &c. may not lawfully be expreſs'd ſeverally to every Perſon? And why then may not the ſame be done in the Lord's Supper? Wherefore the practice of our Church herein is no way unſutable to the Inſtitution of *Chriſt*, or the nature of the Sacrament; and the alteration of it wou'd be for the worſe, and abate the Solemnity of its Adminiſtration. *See* Falkner's *Libert. Eccleſ.* p. 218, &c.

III. The laſt and great objection is againſt the poſture of *kneeling at the Sacrament*; and therefore I ſhall conſider it largely, and endeavour to ſhew,

1. That *Chriſt has not forbidden us to kneel at the Sacrament.*

2. That *kneeling is not a deviation from his Example.*

3. That *'tis not unſutable for its being no Table-geſture.*

4. That

4. That *'tis not contrary to the practice of the Church in the beſt and pureſt Ages.*

5. That *kneeling is not therefore unlawful, becauſe 'twas introduced by Idolaters, and is ſtill notoriouſly abus'd by the Papiſts to Idolatrous ends and purpoſes.*

Firſt then, *Chriſt has not forbidden us to kneel at the Sacrament.* For in all the *Scriptures* God has not given us any expreſs command to determine our practice one way or other: and, if Authority did not reſtrain our Liberty, we might either ſit, kneel or ſtand, without the leaſt violation of the Law of God.

The Apoſtles and Diſciples of our Lord at the Inſtitution of the Sacrament, which the *Scripture* relates in ſeveral places (*a*) were the Repreſentatives of the whole Church, and are to be conſider'd under a double capacity; either as Governours and Miniſters, Intruſted by *Chriſt* with the Power of diſpenſing and adminiſtring the Sacrament, or as ordinary and Lay-communicants. If we conſider them as Governours and Stewards of the Myſteries, their duty to which they are oblig'd by the expreſs Command of their Lord, is to take the Bread into their hands, to Bleſs and Conſecrate it to that Myſterious and Divine uſe to which he deſign'd it, to break and diſtribute it; and ſo in the like manner to take and bleſs the Cup, and give it to their Fellow-Chriſtians. But if we conſider them as Private Men, and in common with all Believers, their duty was to take and receive the Bread and Wine, and to eat and drink in Commemoration of *Chriſt*'s Love. But what ſyllable

(*a*) Matth. 26. 26, *&c.* Mark 14. 22, *&c.* Luke 22. 19. *&c.* 1 Cor. 11. 23, *&c.*

or ſhadow of a Command is there in all the Hiſtory for the uſe of any geſture in the act of receiving? Since then the *Holy Scripture* is altogether ſilent as to this matter, it's ſilence is a full and clear demonſtration, that *kneeling is not repugnant to any expreſs command of our Lord,* becauſe no geſture was ever commanded at all.

But the *Scotch* Miniſters Aſſembled at *Perth*, affirm that when our Lord Commanded his Diſciples to *do this*, he did by thoſe words Command them to uſe that Geſture, which he us'd at that time, as well as to take, eat, drink, *&c.* To this I anſwer, 1. That if our Lord did ſit at the Inſtitution (which we will ſuppoſe at preſent) yet there is no reaſon to think, that He intended by theſe words, *do this*, to oblige us to obſerve this Geſture only, and not ſeveral other circumſtances, which he obſerv'd at the ſame time, as well as this. For Example, if the words may be Interpreted thus, *Do this*, that is, ſit as *Chriſt* did; why not thus alſo, *Do this*, that is, Celebrate the Sacrament in an Upper-room, in a Private-houſe, late at night or in the evening, after a full Supper, in the Company of *Twelve* at moſt, and they only Men, with their Heads cover'd according to the Cuſtom of thoſe Countries, and with unleavened Bread? There lies as great an obligation upon us to obſerve all thoſe circumſtances in imitation of our Lord, as there do's to ſit. 2. Even the two laſt of thoſe circumſtances are generally allow'd, but all the reſt are mention'd in *Scripture*, and were moſt certainly obſerv'd by *Chriſt*: whereas the geſture us'd by them is not mention'd, and what it was is very diſputable, as I ſhall afterwards prove. How then can any Man think himſelf oblig'd in Conſcience to do what *Chriſt* is not expreſſly ſaid

to

to do; and not oblig'd to do what the *Scripture* expreſly ſaies he did? 3. 'Tis clear from St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 11. 23, &c. that *do this*, reſpects only the Bread and Wine, which ſignify the Body and Blood of *Chriſt*, and actions that are ſpecify'd by him, which are eſſential to the right and due Celebration of that Holy Feaſt. For when 'tis ſaid, *Do this in remembrance of me*, and *this do as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me*, and *as oft as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's Death till he come*; 'tis plain, that *do this*, muſt be reſtrain'd to the Sacramental actions there mention'd, and not extended to the geſture, of which the Apoſtle ſpeaks not a word. Our Lord Inſtituted the Sacrament in Remembrance of his Death and Paſſion, and not in Remembrance of his Geſture in Adminiſtring it: and conſequently, *do this*, is a general Command, obliging us only to ſuch particular actions and rites as he had inſtituted, and made neceſſary to be us'd in order to this great end, *viz.* to ſignify and repreſent his Death, and that bloody Sacrifice which he offer'd upon the Croſs for us miſerable Sinners.

Nay the Practice of our *Diſſenters* proves, that no particular geſture is commanded. For there are many ſerious and ſincere Perſons among them, who profeſs that (were they left to their liberty) they cou'd uſe *kneeling* as well as any other geſture: but they think that an indifferent thing becomes unlawful, when 'tis injoin'd by Authority. I have already confuted this opinion; but 'tis certain, that by granting they cou'd uſe the poſture of kneeling, were it not injoin'd, and conſequently that 'tis in it's own nature indifferent; they do thereby grant that there is no Command for any particular poſture.

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I muſt add, that the Reform'd Churches of *France*, and thoſe of *Geneva* and *Helvetia* ſtand, the *Dutch* generally ſit, but in ſome places (as in *Weſt-Frieſland*) they ſtand. The Churches of the *Bohemian* and *Auguſtane* Confeſſion, which ſpread through the large Kingdoms of *Bohemia*, *Denmark*, and *Sweden*, thro' *Norway*, the Dukedom of *Saxony*, *Lithuania* and Ducal *Pruſſia* in *Poland*, the Marquiſate of *Brandenburg* in *Germany*, and ſeveral other places and free Cities in that Empire, do for the moſt part, if not all of them, retain the Geſture of Kneeling. The *Bohemian* Churches were Reform'd by *John Huſſe* and *Jerom* of *Prague*, who ſuffer'd Martyrdom at *Conſtance* about the year 1416. long before *Luther*'s time, and thoſe of the *Ausbourg* or *Auguſtan* Confeſſions were founded and reform'd by *Luther*, and were the firſt Proteſtants properly ſo call'd. But theſe Churches ſo early reform'd and of ſo large extent, did not only uſe the ſame Geſture that our Church injoins at the Sacrament; but they, together with thoſe of the *Helvetic* Confeſſion, did in three (*b*) general Synods unanimouſly condemn the ſitting Geſture (tho' they eſteem'd it in it ſelf lawful) as being ſcandalous for this remarkable Reaſon, *viz.* becauſe it was us'd by the *Arians* (as their Synods call the *Socinians*) in contempt of our Saviour's Divinity, who therefore placed themſelves as Fellows with their Lord at his Table. And thereupon they entreat and exhort all Chriſtians of their Communion *to change ſitting into kneeling or ſtanding, both which Ceremonies we indifferently leave free*, ac-

(*b*) 1. *At* Cracow, *Anno Dom.* 1573. 2. Petricow *or* Peterkaw, 1578. 3. Wladiſlaw, 1583.

cording

cording as the cuſtom of any Church has obtain'd, and we approve of their uſe without ſcandal and blame. Moreover they affirm, *That theſe* Socinians *who deny Chriſt to be* God, *were the firſt that introduced Sitting at the Sacrament into their Churches, contrary to the practice of all the Evangelical Churches in* Europe. Among all theſe Foreign Churches of the Reformation, there is but one that I can find which uſes Sitting, and forbids Kneeling, for fear of Bread-worſhip; but yet in that Synod wherein they condemn'd Kneeling, they left it to the choice of their Churches to uſe Standing, Sitting, or an Ambulatory Geſture (as the *French* (c) do) and at laſt conclude thus; *Theſe Articles are ſo ſetled by mutual conſent, that if the good of the Churches require it, they may and ought to be chang'd, augmented or diminiſh'd.* What now ſhou'd be the ground and reaſon of this Variety both in Opinion and Practice touching the Geſture to be us'd at the Lord's Supper? Is it to be imagin'd that an Aſſembly of Learned and Pious Divines, met together on purpoſe to conſult how to reform their Churches, according to the pure Word of God, ſhou'd thro' weakneſs and inadvertency overlook an expreſs Command of Chriſt for the perpetual uſe of any particular Geſture, if any ſuch there had been? Or ſhall we be ſo uncharitable as to think, that all theſe eminent Churches wilfully paſt it by, and eſtabliſh'd what was moſt agreeable to their own fancies, contrary to the known Will of God? Wou'd they have given liberty to all of their Communion to uſe ſeveral Geſtures according to the Cuſtom of their ſeveral Churches, if our Lord had tied them to obſerve

(c) Harmon. 4. Synods of Holl.

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but one? Wou'd they declare (as the *Dutch* Synod doth) that what they injoin'd might be alter'd, if the good of the Church ſo requir'd; if ſo be Sitting had been expreſly Commanded by our Lord, to be us'd by all Chriſtians to the end of the World? No undoubtedly, they wou'd not; we cannot either in Reaſon or Charity ſuppoſe it.

The true Principle upon which all theſe Reform'd Churches built, and by which they are able to reconcile all this ſeeming difference in this matter, is the very ſame with that which the Church of *England* go's by in her Synods and Convocations; *viz.* (*d*) That as to Rites and Ceremonies of an indifferent nature, every National Church has Authority to inſtitute, change and aboliſh them, as they in Prudence and Charity ſhall think moſt fit and conducive to the ſetting forth God's Glory, the Edification of their People, and the Decent and Reverend Adminiſtation of the Holy Sacrament. Whoſoever therefore refuſes to receive the Lord's Supper according to the Conſtitution of the Church of *England*, purely becauſe Kneeling is contrary to the expreſs Command of Chriſt, muſt condemn the Judgment and Practice of all the Reform'd Churches beyond the Seas, who all agree in this, That the Geſture in the Act of Receiving is to be reckon'd among things Indifferent; and that whether we ſit, or kneel or ſtand, or Receive walking, we tranſgreſs

(*d*) Vid. Art. 34. obſervat. of the *French* and *Dutch* Divines on the Harmony of Confeſſions, Edit. *Genevæ* 1681. Sect. 14. p. 120. *In hoc etiam ritu* (ſpeaking of Kneeling at the Sacrament) *ſuam cuique Eccleſiæ libertatem ſalvam reliquendam arbitramur.*

no

no Law of God; and conſequently they prove my Aſſertion true, That Kneeling is no more contrary to any expreſs Command than any other Geſture; becauſe they allow of all, as lawful in themſelves to be us'd, which cannot conſiſt with an expreſs Command for the uſe of any one Geſture whatſoever.

Upon the whole matter, I think we may certainly conclude, that there is not a tittle of a Command in the whole *New Teſtament* to oblige us to receive the Lord's Supper in any particular poſture: and if any be ſo ſcrupulous, as not to receive it in any other Geſture, but what is expreſſly commanded, they muſt never receive it as long as they live.

Secondly, I ſhall prove, that *Kneeling is not a deviation from Chriſt's example.* This will appear, if we conſider, 1. that 'tis doubtful what Geſture our Saviour us'd at the Inſtitution of the Sacrament. For the *Scripture* do's not inform us what it was, and the *Jews* us'd variety of Geſtures at the Paſſover; and therefore, ſince our Lord's Example cannot certainly be known in this Matter, our Church cannot be charg'd with deviation from it. 2. Thoſe who Kneel at the Sacrament in compliance with the Orders of the Church, do manifeſtly follow the Example of Chriſt. For our Saviour comply'd with that Paſſover-geſture, which the *Jews* then us'd, tho' it was not the ſame that was us'd at the Inſtitution in *Egypt:* and his compliance may teach us, not to be ſcrupulous about Geſtures, but to conform to the innocent and prevailing cuſtoms of the Church, whereſoever we live. And if Chriſtians did walk according to this rule, they wou'd greatly promote the peace and welfare of the Church of Chriſt, and in ſo doing procure quiet and peace to themſelves, with unſpeakable comfort and ſatisfaction.

But

But ſuppoſing our Lord did ſit, as the *Diſſenters* will have it; yet his bare example do's not oblige all Chriſtians to a like practice. 1. Becauſe naked examples, without ſome rule or note added to them, to ſignify that 'tis God's Will to have them conſtantly follow'd, have not the force of Laws perpetually obliging the Conſcience. And therefore, in this caſe, becauſe no ſuch note is to be found, we are not tied in Conſcience to a ſtrict imitation of Chriſt's Example. Thus the Example of our Saviour do's not oblige us to defer our Baptiſm till the Age of 30 years, or not to receive the Sacrament till a little before death; and, I pray, what reaſon is there to follow his Example in *ſitting* at the Sacrament, any more than in thoſe particulars? 2. We are bound to imitate Chriſt in thoſe things only which he has commanded: but *where there is no command, there is no neceſſity*. Indeed we muſt follow Chriſt and his Apoſtles; but in what? Why, in acting according to the *Goſpel-rule*. An example may help to interpret a Law, but of it ſelf it is no Law. Againſt a rule no example is a competent warrant: and if the example be according to the rule, 'tis not the Example, but the Rule, that is the Meaſure of our actions. 3. The bare Example of Chriſt is no warrant for us to go by, becauſe he was an Extaordinary Perſon, and did many things which we cannot, and many which we muſt not do. He Faſted 40 Daies and 40 Nights, wrought Miracles, *&c.* which we are not to pretend to. They ſay indeed, *We are bound to imitate Chriſt and the commendable Example of his Apoſtles, in all things wherein it is not evident, they had ſpecial Reaſons moving them thereunto, which do not concern us.* But I wou'd willingly

lingly be inform'd how we ſhall be ever able to know when they acted upon ſpecial Reaſons, and what they were, that we may know our Duty, if a bare Example without any Rule obliges us. And if we guide our ſelves by Scripture or Reaſon in this matter, then they are the meaſures of the Example. Beſides, if we are not to imitate them in ſuch things, as they were mov'd to do upon ſpecial Reaſons, which did not concern us; then we are obliged to imitate their Examples in ſuch things as they did upon general and common Reaſons, which concern us as well as them, or we are not oblig'd at all by any Example: and if ſo, then thoſe Reaſons are to be our Rule, to which we are to reduce their Examples. Unleſs we find ſome general or common Reaſon, we have no Warrant (according to their own Principle) to follow their Examples: and when ſuch Reaſons do appear, then it's not the Example alone that obliges us, but Reaſon that approves the Example. To bring their own Rule to the caſe in hand, how do they know but our Lord was mov'd to Sit at the Sacrament by Special Reaſons drawn from that Time and Place, or the Feaſt of the Paſſover, to which that Geſture was peculiar? How do they know, but that our Lord might have us'd another Geſture, if the Sacrament had been Inſtituted apart from the Paſſover?

The neceſſity of the time made the *Jews* eat the Paſſover after one faſhion in *Egypt*, which afterward ceaſing, gave occaſion to alter it in *Canaan*; and how do we know, but that our Lord comply'd with the preſent neceſſity, and that his Example (if he did Sit) was only temporary, and not deſign'd for a Standing Law, perpetually obliging to a like Practice? If *Chriſt* acted upon ſpecial

Reaſons, then we are not obliged, by their own Rule: and if he did not, let them produce the Reaſons if they can, which make this Example of *Chriſt* of general and perpetual uſe, and to oblige all Chriſtians to follow it. 4. 'Tis abſurd to talk of *Chriſt*'s Example apart from all Law and Rule, and to make that alone a principle of duty diſtinct from the Precepts of the Goſpel, becauſe *Chriſt* himſelf alwaies govern'd his actions by a Law. For if we conſider him as a Man, he was obliged by the *Natural* Law, as a *Jew* by the *Moſaic* Law, as the *Meſſias* by the *Goſpel-Law*. He came to fulfil all Righteouſneſs, and to Teach and Practiſe the whole Will of God. If therefore we look only to his Example, without conſidering the various capacities and relations he bare, both towards God and towards us, and the ſeveral Laws by which he ſtood bound, which were the Meaſures of his Actions; we ſhall miſerably miſtake our way, and act like Fools, when we do ſuch things as he did purſuant to infinite Wiſdom. Thus, if we ſhou'd ſubject our ſelves to the Law of *Moſes*, as he did, we ſhou'd thereby fruſtrate the great deſign of the Goſpel: and yet even this we are obliged to do, if his Example alone be a ſufficient warrant for our actions. Thus it appears that *Chriſt*'s bare Example do's not oblige us to do any thing, that is not commanded.

I ſhall only add, that they who urge the Example of *Chriſt* againſt *Kneeling at the Sacrament*, do not follow it themſelves. For our Saviour probably us'd a Leaning Geſture; and by what Authority do they change it to *Sitting*? Certainly, our changing the Geſture is as warrantable as theirs. Nor is it enough to ſay, that *Sitting* comes nearer our Saviour's Geſture than *Kneeling*; for if they keep

keep to their own Rule, they muſt not vary at all. The *Presbyterians* (if one may argue from their Practices to their Principles) lay very little ſtreſs on this Argument taken from the Example of *Chriſt*. For tho' they generally chuſe to Sit, yet they do not condemn Standing as Sinful, or Unlawful in it ſelf; and ſeveral are willing to receive it in that poſture, in our Churches; which ſurely is every whit as wide from the Pattern our Lord is ſuppos'd to have ſet us, (whether he lay along or ſate upright) as that which is injoin'd and practis'd by the Church of *England*. There is too a Confeſſed variation allow'd of and practis'd by the generality of *Diſſenters*, both *Presbyterians* and *Independents*, from the Inſtitution and Practice of *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, in the other Sacrament of Baptiſm. For they have chang'd *dipping* into *ſprinkling*; and 'tis ſtrange, that thoſe who ſcruple *kneeling* at the Lord's Supper, can allow of this greater change in Baptiſm. Why ſhou'd not the Peace and unity of the Church, and Charity to the Public, prevail with them to kneel at the Lord's Supper; as much as mercy and tenderneſs to the Infant's Body, to *ſprinkle* or pour water on the Face, contrary to the firſt Inſtitution?

Thirdly, kneeling is not therefore repugnant to the nature of the Lord's Supper, becauſe 'tis no Table-Geſture. The Sacrament is a Supper; and therefore, ſay they, the Geſture at the Lord's Table ought to be the ſame, which we uſe and obſerve at our ordinary Tables, according to the cuſtom and faſhion of our Native Country: and by conſequence, we ought to *Sit*, and not to *Kneel*, becauſe ſitting is the ordinary Table-geſture, according to the mode and faſhion of *England*.

Here, by the way, we may obſerve, that this

Argument overthrows the two others drawn from the *Command* and *Example* of *Chriſt*. For, 1. Different Table-geſtures are us'd in different Countries; and therefore, tho' *Chriſt* did Sit, yet we are not oblig'd to Sit after his *Example*, unleſs ſitting be in our Country the common Table-geſture. 2. If the Nature of the Sacrament require a Table-geſture, and that geſture in particular which is cuſtomary; then God has not *Commanded* any particular geſture, becauſe different Countries have different Table-geſtures.

However, I ſhall fully Anſwer this Argument drawn from the Nature of the Sacrament, by ſhewing, 1. *What is the Nature of it.* 2. That *it do's not abſolutely require a common Table-geſture.* 3. That *Kneeling is very agreeable to the nature of the Lord's Supper, tho' 'tis no Table-geſture.*

1. Then, the Nature of the Sacrament is eaſily underſtood, if we conſider that the *Scripture* calls it the *Lord's Table* and the *Lord's Supper*. The *Greek* Fathers call it a Feaſt and a Banquet, becauſe of that Proviſion and Entertainment which our Lord has made for all worthy Receivers. 'Tis ſtyl'd a *Supper* and a *Feaſt*, either becauſe 'twas Inſtituted by *Chriſt* at Supper-time, or becauſe it repreſents a Supper and a Feaſt; and ſo it is not of the ſame nature with a civil and ordinary Supper or Feaſt, tho' it bear the ſame name. Three things are eſſential to a Feaſt, *Plenty*, *Good Company* and *Mirth*: but the Plenty of the *Lord's Supper* is a Plenty of Spiritual Dainties; and the Company conſiſts of the Three Perſons of the *Trinity*, and good Chriſtians; and the Mirth is wholly Spiritual. So that the *Lord's Supper* differs in its nature from civil Banquets, as much as Heaven and Earth, Body and Spirit differ in theirs. Farther, the *Lord's Supper* is a Feaſt upon a Sacrifice for Sin, where-

wherein we are particularly to commemorate the Death of *Christ*. 'Twas also instituted in honour of our Lord, and to preserve an Eternal Memory of his wondrous Works, and to Bless and Praise our Great Benefactour. 'Tis also a Covenanting Rite between God and all worthy Communicants, and signifies that we are in a State of Peace and Friendship with him; that we own him to be our God, and swear Fidelity to him; we take the Sacrament upon it (as we ordinarily say) that we will not henceforth live unto our selves, but to him alone that died for us. 'Tis also a means to convey to us the Merits of *Christ*'s Death, and a Pledge to assure us thereof. Lastly, 'twas instituted to be a Bond of Union between Christians, to engage and dispose us to love one another, as our Lord loved us, who thought not his Life too dear, nor his Blood too much to part with for our sakes. This therefore being the Nature of the Sacrament, it follows,

2. That *it do's not absolutely require a common Table-gesture.* For if the Nature of the Sacrament, consider'd as a Feast, necessarily requires a Table-gesture; then the nature of the Sacrament, consider'd as a Feast, do's as well require all other Formalities, that are essential, either to all civil Feasts whatsoever, or to all Feasts as they obtain among us: and consequently we must carve and drink one to another, *&c.* at the *Lord's Supper*, as we always do at other Feasts. But this our *Dissenters* will by no means allow; nor do they think themselves obliged to observe all the other Formalities of a Feast, tho' they are as agreeable to the Nature of a Feast, as *Sitting* is.

It's not agreeable to the Nature of a Feast, that one of the Guests, and the principal one too, shou'd fill out the Wine, and break the Bread, and distribute it to the rest of the Society; but this the

Diſſenters generally allow of, and practiſe at the Holy Communion. It's not agreeable to the nature of a Feaſt to ſit from the Table, diſpers'd up and down the Room. In all public Feaſts there are ſeveral Tables provided, when one is not big enough to receive the Gueſts; and yet the *Diſſenters* generally receive in their Pews, ſcatter'd up and down the Church, and think one Table is ſufficient, tho' not capable of receiving the twentieth part of the Communicants in ſome large Pariſhes and numerous Aſſemblies. And where there are ſo few, that they may come up to, and ſit at the Table, they generally are againſt it (eſpecially the *Presbyterians*) and think they are not obliged to obſerve that formality, tho' conſtantly practis'd at common and civil Entertainments. It's by no means agreeable to the nature of a Feaſt to be ſorrowful. To mourn and grieve at a Feaſt is as indecent and unſutable, as to laugh at a Funeral. But ſure our *Diſſenters* will not ſay, that to come to the Sacrament with a penitent and broken ſpirit; to come with a hearty ſorrow for all our Sin, which caus'd ſo much pain and torment to our deareſt and greateſt Friend, our ever bleſſed Redeemer; to reflect upon the Agonies of his Soul in the Garden, the bitterneſs of his deadly Cup, the Torture he endur'd on the Croſs, with a deep Sympathy and Trouble for the occaſion; they will not ſurely, I ſay, affirm, that ſuch a diſpoſition of Heart and Mind is improper and unſutable to the Nature of this Feaſt, which we ſolemnize in Commemoration of his Death for our ſakes.

This Sacrament is alſo call'd the Lord's Supper; and conſequently the nature of it requires the Evening, as the proper ſeaſon for it: and yet our *Diſſenters*

ters make no ſcruple of Communicating at Noon.

Again, the nature of the Lord's Supper do's not neceſſarily require a Table-geſture, becauſe 'tis not of the ſame nature with common and ordinary Feaſts. For we cannot argue from Natural and Civil things to Spiritual; or conclude that, becauſe they agree in their names, they are of the ſame nature. And therefore, tho' the Sacrament is a Feaſt; yet becauſe 'tis a Spiritual Feaſt, and not of the ſame nature with common and ordinary Feaſts, we muſt not think, that ſuch a geſture as is neceſſary to the one, is alſo neceſſary to the other.

I muſt add, that the nature of the Lord's Supper, conſider'd as a Feaſt, do's not neceſſarily require a common Table-geſture in order to right and worthy receiving; becauſe the *Diſſenters* grant, that it may be worthily receiv'd *Standing*, tho' Standing is no common Table-geſture.

If any ſhou'd yet urge, that no geſture beſides Sitting is agreeable to the nature of the Sacrament, conſider'd as a Feaſt; and that to uſe any other geſture wou'd profane the Ordinance; I anſwer, that God calls the Paſſover a Feaſt, *Exod.* 12. 14. and yet he commanded the *Iſraelites* to celebrate it with their *Loins girt, their Shoes on their Feet, and their Staff in their Hands*; which were all ſigns of haſte, but no Table-geſtures either among the *Jews* or the *Egyptians*. Now to ſay, that God injoin'd Geſtures unſuitable to that Ordinance, is to call his Wiſdom in queſtion: and to ſay, that the Feaſt of the Paſſover did in it's nature admit of ſeveral Geſtures, is to yield all that I deſire; for then the Sacrament, conſider'd as a Feaſt, will admit of ſeveral too, and conſequently do's not oblige us to obſerve only a Feaſt-geſture for the due celebration of it.

3. *Kneeling is very agreeable to the nature of the Lord's Supper, tho' 'tis no Table-geſture.* 1. Becauſe 'tis a very fit Geſture to expreſs Reverence, Humility and Gratitude by; which Holy affections are requiſite to the Sacrament. 2. Since Chriſt ought to be Ador'd at the Lord's Supper for his wonderful kindneſs to us, therefore whatſoever is fit to expreſs our Veneration, is not unſutable to the Sacrament; and conſequently bowing the Knees is proper, becauſe 'tis an external ſign of Reverence. 3. Since lifting up our Hands and Eyes, and imploying our Tongues in uttering God's Praiſes, are agreeable to the Lord's Supper; why ſhou'd *Kneeling* be thought unſutable, which is only Glorifying God with another part of our Body? 4. The Holy Sacrament was Inſtituted in remembrance of Chriſt's Death and Sufferings; and therefore I deſire the *Diſſenters* to conſider his Geſture in the very extremity of his Paſſion, and to obſerve, that he then pray'd *Kneeling*, Luke 22. 41. And ſurely no ſober Perſon will ſay, that 'tis improper to *Kneel* at the Sacrament, where we Commemorate thoſe Sufferings, part of which he endur'd upon his bended *Knees*. 5. If we conſider the benefits of the Sacrament, we cannot think *Kneeling* an unbecoming Geſture at it. If a grateful hearty ſence of God's infinite Mercy thro' the Merits and Sufferings of his Son, and of the manifold Benefits which our Lord has purchas'd with his moſt precious Blood; If a Mind deeply humbled under the ſenſe of our own Guilt, and Unworthineſs to receive any Mercy at all from the Hands of our Creator and Soveraign Lord, whom we have by numberleſs and heinous Crimes ſo highly provok'd and incens'd againſt us; If ſuch an inward temper and diſpoſition

ſition of Soul becomes us at this Holy Feaſt, (which I think no Man will deny) then ſurely the moſt humble and reverential Geſture of the Body will become us too. Why ſhou'd not a ſubmiſſive lowly deportment of body ſute with this ſolemnity, as well as an humble lowly Mind? And this is that which our Church (*e*) declares to be the end of her Injunction, in requiring all the Communicants to Kneel, *viz. for a ſignification of an humble and grateful acknowledgment of the Benefits of Chriſt therein given to all worthy Receivers.* The Commemoration of the Death and Paſſion of the Son of God will ſtrike a Man, almoſt naturally, into the humbleſt poſture of Adoration: But if any reverence be due at ſuch a time, I am ſure *Sitting* is a very unfit poſture to expreſs it. In a word, whatſoever Geſture beſt anſwers the Principal ends of this Holy Feaſt, do's beſt ſute it's nature, and ought to be beſt eſteem'd of, if we will be guided by the nature of the thing: and that *Kneeling* do's beſt anſwer the Nature and Ends of the Lord's Supper, I think, I have fully prov'd.

I ſhall crave Leave to obſerve in the laſt place, that the Primitive Church had no ſuch Notion of the neceſſity of a Table-geſture, as the *Diſſenters* maintain. There is not the leaſt mention made of the name *Table*, in any of their Writings, for the ſpace of 200 years after *Chriſt*. For they call the Place, on which the Conſecrated Elements ſtood, the *Altar*; and the Euchariſt they call an *Oblation* and a *Sacrifice:* and what connexion, I Pray, is there between an *Altar* or a *Sacrifice*, and a Table-geſture? The *Diſſenters* indeed (*f*) ſay,

(*e*) *See* the Declaration at the end of the Communion Service in the B. of Com. Prayer. (*f*) *Diſpute againſt Kneeling*, arg. 1. p. 6. 16. &c.

that *Kneeling or an Adoring-geſture is againſt the dignity of Gueſts, and debars us the Privileges and Prerogatives of the Lord's Table, ſuch as ſocial admittance and ſocial entertainment; that it is againſt the purpoſe of* Chriſt, *whoſe intention was to dignify us by ſetting us at his Table*; and much more of this nature: but 'tis plain that the *Fathers* thought otherwiſe, as the Phraſes they uſe, and the Titles they give the Sacrament, plainly demonſtrate. They call it as St. *Paul* doth, the *Lord's Supper, the Kingly, Royal, and moſt Divine Supper*, which import Deference, Diſtance, and Reſpect on our parts; *the Dreadful Sacrifice, the Venerable and Unbloody Sacrifice, the Wonderful and Terrible Myſteries, the Royal, Spiritual, Holy, Formidable, Tremendous Table.* The Bread and Wine after Conſecration, are in their Language call'd the *moſt Myſterious, moſt Holy Food and Nutriment*, the *moſt Holy things*; and the place where the Table ſtood, the *moſt Holy part of the Temple*, in alluſion to that of the *Jewiſh* Temple, to which the *Jews* paid the higheſt Reverence. The Bread in particular they ſtyl'd the *Bread of God*; the Cup, the *Holy and Myſterious, the Royal and Dreadful Cup.* They adviſe the Communicants to *Reverence theſe Holy Myſteries, to come with Fear and Trembling, with Sorrow and Shame, with ſilence and down-caſt Eyes, to keep their Joy within, and to approach the Table with all the Signs and Expreſſions of Reverence and Humility imaginable.* How can theſe Speeches conſiſt with that Social, Familiar carriage at the Sacrament, which the Patrons of the Table-geſture contend for, as the Privilege of Gueſts, and the Prerogative of the Lord's Table?

Fourthly,

Fourthly, I am to ſhew that *Kneeling at the Lord's Supper is not contrary to the general Practice of the Church in the firſt Ages.* This I ſhall do by proving, 1. That *it's highly probable, that the Primitive Church us'd to Kneel in the act of receiving the Holy Sacrament, as our cuſtom at preſent is.* 2. That *it's moſt certain they us'd an Adoring Poſture.*

Firſt then, *it's highly probable, that the Primitive Church us'd to Kneel in the act of receiving the Holy Sacrament.* I have already ſhewn, that the *Scripture* do's not inform us, what Geſture was us'd at the Inſtitution of the *Lord's Supper*: and I deſire thoſe, who contend for a common Table-geſture, and particularly *Sitting*, to obſerve, that the Primitive Church thought *ſitting* to be a very irreverent Poſture in the Service of God. The *Laodicean* Synod, finding great inconveniences to ariſe from the *Love-Feaſts*, which were kept at the ſame time with the *Lord's Supper*, forbad the ſaid Feaſts, and the lying upon Couches in the Church, as their manner was at thoſe Feaſts. The ſame Practice was forbidden by the Council of *Carthage*, c. 28. and the Decree was Ratify'd by the ſixth *Trullian* Council, *c.* 74. and that under the pain of Excommunication. Now the Reaſons, upon which 'twas forbidden, were in all probability taken from the diſorder and irreverence, the animoſities and exceſs, that accompany'd thoſe Feaſts.

Juſtin Martyr, who liv'd in the *Second* Century, ſaies, *We riſe up together and ſend up our Prayers*, Apol. 2. from whence 'tis clear that they did not Sit: but in moſt other places they were not permitted to ſit at all, not ſo much as at the Leſſons or in Sermon-time; as appears plainly from what

what *Philoſtorgius* (*g*) obſerves of *Theophilus* an *Indian* Biſhop, That among ſeveral irregularities, which he corrected in thoſe Churches, he particularly Reform'd this, *That the People were wont to Sit, when the Leſſons out of the Goſpel were read unto them*; and *Sozomen* (*h*) notes it as a very unuſual thing in the Biſhop of *Alexandria, that he did not riſe up when the Goſpels were read.*

Optatus Biſhop of *Milevis* (*i*) cites a paſſage out of the 50. *Pſalm*, and applies it home to *Parmenianus* the *Donatiſt*, after this manner; *Thou ſitteſt and ſpeakeſt againſt thy Brother*, &c. in which place God reproves him that ſits and defames his Brother: and therefore ſuch evil Teachers as you, ſaies he, are more particularly pointed at in the Text, *For the People are not Licens'd to ſit in the Church.* Now if it had not been the general Cuſtom to ſtand the whole time of Divine Service, and particularly at the Leſſons and Sermons, *Parmenianus* might eaſily have retorted this Argument upon *Optatus*, as concluding nothing againſt him in particular, but what might be charg'd in common upon all private Chriſtians, who ſate in the Church as well as he.

(*k*) *Tertullian* reproves it as an ill cuſtom, *that ſome were wont to ſit at Prayer*; and a little further in the ſame Chapter he has theſe words; *Add thereunto the Sin of irreverence, which the very Heathen, if they did perceive well and underſtand what we did, won'd take notice of. For if it be irreverent to ſit in the preſence of, and to confront, one whom you have a high reſpect and veneration for; how much*

(*g*) Hiſt. Eccleſ. *l.* 3. *p.* 29. (*h*) Hiſt. Eccleſ. *l.* 7. *c.* 19. (*i*) De Schiſm. *Donat.* l. 4. *See alſo Albaſpin.* not. in *Optat.* (*k*) De Orat. *c.* 12.

more

more irreligious is this geſture in the ſight of the living God, the Angel of Prayer yet ſtanding by? Unleſs we think fit to upbraid God that Prayer has tir'd us. *Euſebius* alſo (*l*) commends *Conſtantine*, becauſe when he was preſent at a long *Panegyric* concerning *Chriſt*'s Sepulchre, and was ſollicited to ſit down, he refus'd to do ſo, ſaying, *it was unfit to attend upon any Diſcourſe concerning God with eaſe and ſoftneſs, and that it was very conſonant to Piety and Religion, that Diſcourſes about Divine things ſhou'd be heard ſtanding.*

Thus much may ſuffice for ſatisfaction, that the ancient Church did by no means approve of Sitting, or a common Table-geſture, as fitting to be us'd in Divine Service, except at the Reading of the Leſſons, and hearing of the Sermon; which too was only practis'd in ſome places; for in others the People were not allow'd to ſit at all in their Religious Aſſemblies. Which Cuſtom is ſtill obſerv'd in moſt, if not all the Eaſtern Churches at this day, wherein there are no Seats erected or allow'd for the uſe of the People.

Now if the Apoſtles had Taught and Eſtabliſh'd *Sitting* (not only as convenient, but) as neceſſary to be us'd in order to worthy receiving the *Lord's Supper*; 'tis moſt ſtrange and unaccountable, 1. That there ſhou'd be ſuch an early and univerſal revolt of the Primitive Church from the Doctrine and Conſtitutions of the Apoſtles. 2. That ſo many Churches in diſtant Countries, being perfectly Free and Independent one upon another, ſhou'd unanimouſly conſpire together to introduce a novel-cuſtom contrary to the Apoſtolical Practice and Or-

(*l*) De Vit. *Conſtant.* l. 4.

der;

der; and not only ſo, but that, 3. They ſhou'd cenſure the practice and injunctions of inſpir'd Men, as indecent and unfit to be follow'd and obſerv'd in the public Worſhip of God; and all this without any Perſon's taking notice, or complaining or oppoſing, either then or in the ſucceeding generations.

As for *Standing* in the time of Divine Service, both at Prayers and at the Sacrament, 'tis ſo evident that the ancient Church did uſe it, that I ſhall not endeavour to prove it: and as for *Kneeling*, 'tis plain the Primitive Chriſtians us'd that geſture alſo. For, tho' on Sundays and the Fifty daies between *Eaſter* and *Whitſunday* they obſerv'd Standing; yet at other times they us'd the geſture of Kneeling at their public Devotions, as appears from the authorities cited at the (*m*) bottom.

Now ſince they were wont, in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity, to receive the Holy Sacrament every day; and ſince (*n*) it was deliver'd and receiv'd with a Form of Prayer, and that on thoſe daies when they conſtantly Pray'd Kneeling; and ſince it is probable, that when they receiv'd the Sacrament, they did not alter the Praying-poſture of the day; therefore I conclude, that they receiv'd the Sacrament *Kneeling* upon thoſe daies, on which they Pray'd Kneeling. For, ſince *Sitting* was ge-

(*m*) Conc. 1. Nic. *c.* 20. *Reſp. Queſt.* inter Opera *Juſt. Mart.* p. 468. *Tertull.* de Coron. Mil. *c.* 3. *Epiphan.* Expoſ. fid. Cath. p. 1105. *Edit. Par.* St. *Jer.* Prol. com. in Epiſt. ad Eph. St. *Auſt.* Epiſt. 119. ad *Jan. c.* 15. *Tertull.* de Orat. *c.* 3. (*n*) See *Tertull.* Apol. *c.* 39. p. 47. St. *Auſt.* Epiſt 118. *Conſt. Apol. l.* 2. *c.* 57. St. *Chryſoſt.* Hom. 1. in *c.* 2. Ep. 1. ad *Tim.* St. *Ambroſ.* de Sacram. *l.* 4. *c.* 5. *Cave's* Prim. Chriſt. *c.* 11. St. *Cyril* Catech. Myſt. 5. St. *Auſt.* Reſp. ad *Oroſ.* Queſt. 49. Tom. 4. p. 691. *Baſil.* 1541. *Euſeb.* Hiſt. Eccleſ. *l.* 6. *c.* 35.

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nerally condemn'd as an indecent and irreverent geſture by the Primitive Church; and ſince no Man in his Wits will ſay, that Proſtration, or lying flat upon the ground, was ever us'd in the act of receiving, or ever fit to be ſo; therefore the poſture of receiving muſt be either ſtanding or kneeling.

And from hence I gather, that on their common and ordinary daies (when there was no peculiar reaſon to invite or oblige them to Stand at the Sacrament) in all likelihood they us'd Kneeling, that is, the ordinary poſture. They us'd one and the ſame poſture (*viz. Standing*) both at their Prayers and at the Sacrament on the Lord's day, and for Fifty daies after *Eaſter*, contrary to what was uſual at other times; and why then ſhou'd any Man think they did not obſerve one and the ſame poſture at all other times? *viz.* that as at ſuch times they did conſtantly Kneel at their Prayers, ſo they did alſo conſtantly Kneel at the Sacrament, which was given and receiv'd in a Prayer.

From the ſtrength of theſe Premiſes I may premiſe my ſelf thus much ſucceſs; that whoſoever ſhall carefully weigh and peruſe them with a teachable and unprejudiced mind, ſhall find himſelf much more inclin'd to believe the Primitive Church us'd at ſome times to Kneel (as we do) at the Holy Communion, than that they never did Kneel at all, or that ſuch a poſture was never us'd or heard of, but excluded from their Congregations, as ſome great Advocates for Sitting have confidently proclaim'd it to the World.

But *Secondly*, Suppoſe they never did Kneel as we do, yet this is moſt certain, that they receiv'd the Lord's Supper in an adoring poſture; which

which is the ſame thing, and will ſufficiently juſtify the preſent Practice of our Church, as being agreeable to that of pure Antiquity. For the proof of this, numerous Teſtimonies both of *Greek* and *Latin* Fathers might be alledg'd; but I will content my ſelf (and, I hope, the Reader too) with a few of each ſort, which are ſo plain and expreſs, that he who will except againſt them, will alſo with the ſame face and aſſurance except againſt the Whiteneſs of Snow, and the Light of the Sun at Noon-day.

And firſt for the *Greek* Fathers, let the Teſtimony of (*o*) St. *Cyril* be heard, than which nothing can be more plain and expreſs to our purpoſe. This holy Father in a place before cited, gives Inſtructions to Communicants, how to behave themſelves when they approach the Lord's Table, and that in the act of receiving both the Bread and the Wine. At the receiving of the Cup he adviſes thus; *Approach* (ſaies he) *not rudely ſtretching forth thy hands, but bowing thy ſelf, and in a poſture of Worſhip and Adoration, ſaying* Amen. To the ſame purpoſe (*p*) St. *Chryſoſtom* ſpeaks in his Fourteenth Homily on the Firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, where he provokes and excites the Chriſtians of his time to an awful and reverential deportment at the Holy Communion, by the Example of the Wiſe Men, who ador'd our Saviour in his Infancy, after this manner; *This Body the Wiſe Men reverenc'd even when it lay in the Manger, and approaching thereunto worſhipp'd it with fear and great trembling. Let us therefore who are Citizens of Heaven, imitate at leaſt theſe*

(*o*) St. *Cyril.* Hieroſol. Myſtag. Catech. 5. verſus finem, Pariſ. Edit. p. 244. (*p*) 24 Hom. Ep. ad Cor. p. 538. To. 9. Pariſ.

Barba-

Barbarians. *Dost thou ſeeſt this Body, not in a Manger, but on the Altar; not held by a Woman, but by the Prieſt,* &c. *Let us therefore ſtir up our ſelves, and be horribly afraid, and manifeſt a much greater Reverence than thoſe* Barbarians, *leſt coming lightly, and at a venture, we heap fire on our Heads.* The ſame Father in another place expreſly bids them to *fall down and Communicate*, when the Table is made ready, and the King himſelf there: and in order to beget in their Minds great and awful Thoughts concerning that Holy and Myſterious Feaſt, he further exhorts them, (p) *That when they ſaw the Chancel doors open, then they ſhou'd ſuppoſe Heaven it ſelf was unfolded from above, and that the Angels deſcended,* to be Lookers on. I ſuppoſe he means, of their Courage and Behaviour at the Table of the Lord, and by giving their attendance to grace that Solemnity. With the Teſtimony of theſe Ancient Writers *Theodoret* agrees, who in a Dialogue between an Orthodox Chriſtian and an Heretic, brings in *Orthodoxus* thus Diſcourſing of the Supper of the Lord. The myſterious Symbols or Signs in the Sacrament (viz. *Bread* and *Wine*) depart not from their proper Nature; for they continue in their former Eſſence, and keep their former Shape and Form, and approve themſelves both to our ſight and touch to be as they were before: (q) *but they are conſider'd for ſuch as they are made*, (that is, in reſpect to their Spiritual ſignification, and that Divine uſe to which they were conſecrated) *and are believ'd and ador'd as thoſe very things which they are believ'd to be.* Which words plainly import thus much, that

(p) St. *Chryſ.* Hom. 3. in Ep. ad Epheſ. in moral. p. 1151.
(q) Dialog. 2. To. 4. p. 85. Pariſ. Edit.

the conſecrated Elements were receiv'd with a Geſture of Adoration; and at the ſame time aſſure us, that ſuch a Behaviour at the Lords ſupper was not founded upon the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation. For there is not a more manifeſt inſtance in all the Ancients againſt that abſurd Doctrine, which the Roman Church ſo obſtinately believes at this very day, than what *Theodoret* gives us in the words abovemention'd. Laſtly, (to alledge no more out of the *Greek* Fathers) that Story which *Gregory Nazianzen* (*r*) relates concerning *Gorgonia*, will much confirm what has been ſaid, *viz.* That being ſick, and having uſed ſeveral Medicins in vain at laſt ſhe reſolv'd upon this courſe. She went in the ſtilneſs of the Night to the public Church, and having with her ſome of the conſecrated Elements which ſhe had reſerv'd at home, *ſhe fell down on her knees before the Altar*, and with a loud voice pray'd to him whom ſhe *Ador'd*, and in concluſion was healed. I am not much concern'd, whether the Reader will believe or cenſure this Miracle; but it's certain, that this famous Father has Recorded it and commends his Siſter for the way ſhe took for her Recovery. This is home to my purpoſe; and clearly diſcovers that *Gorgonia* did Kneel, or at leaſt us'd a Poſture of Adoration when ſhe ate the Sacramental Bread. And without doubt in Communicating ſhe obſerv'd the ſame Poſture that others generally did in public: She did that in her ſickneſs, which all others us'd to do in their health, when they came to the Sacrament; *that is*, She Kneeled down.

(*r*) Orat. in laud. *Gorgon.* p. 187. Pariſ. Edit.

For

For it can't be ſuppos'd, that at this time, when ſhe came to beg ſo great a Bleſſing of Almighty God in the public Church and at the Altar, call'd by the Ancients *The Place of Prayer,* ſhe wou'd be guilty of any misbehaviour, and make uſe of a ſingular Poſture, different from what was generally us'd by Chriſtians when they came to the ſame place to communicate, and pray over the great Propitiatory Sacrifice; which they lookt upon as the moſt prevailing and effectual way of Praying, the moſt likely to render God favourable to them, and to prevail with him above all other Prayers which they offer'd at any other time, or in any other place. So much for the Authorities of the *Greek* Fathers, who were Men eminent for Learning and Piety in their Daies, and great Lights and Ornaments in the Primitive Church. With theſe the *Latin* Fathers fully agree in their Judgments concerning our preſent Caſe. And of theſe I will only mention two (tho' more might be produc'd) and thoſe very eminent and illuſtrious Perſons, had in great veneration by the then preſent Age wherein they flouriſh'd, and by ſucceeding Generations. The firſt is (*ſ*) St. *Ambroſe* Biſhop of *Milan*, in a Book he wrote concerning the Holy Ghoſt, where enquiring after the meaning of the Pſalmiſt, when he exhorts Men to exalt the Lord, and to worſhip his Footſtool, he gives us the ſenſe in theſe words: That it ſeems to belong unto the myſtery of our Lord's Incarnation; and then goes on to ſhew for what Reaſon it may be accommodated to that Myſtery, and at laſt concludes thus; *By the Footſtool thereſore is the Earth to be*

(*ſ*) *Ambroſ.* de Sp. Sanct. l. 3. c. 12.

underſtood, and by the Earth the body of Chriſt, which at this day too we adore in the Sacrament, and which the Apoſtles worſhipp'd in the Lord Jeſus, &c. St. *Auſtin* (Biſhop of *Hippo*) Comments, on the very ſame words and to the ſame purpoſe. For thus he reſolves that Queſtion, How or in what ſenſe the Earth his Footſtool may be worſhipp'd without impiety? *Becauſe he took earth of the earth, for fleſh is of the earth; and he took fleſh of the fleſh of* Mary; *and becauſe he convers'd here in the fleſh, and gave us his very fleſh to eat unto Salvation. Now there is none who eateth that fleſh, but firſt worſhippeth. We have found then how this Footſtool may be ador'd; ſo that we are ſo far from ſinning by adoring, that we really ſin if we do not adore.* In the Judgment therefore of theſe Primitive Biſhops, we may lawfully adore at the Myſteries, tho' not the Myſteries themſelves; at the Sacraments, tho' not the Sacraments themſelves; the Creator in the Creature which is ſanctify'd, not the Creature it ſelf; as a late (*t*) Proteſtant Writer of great Learning and Quality among the *French*, diſtinguiſhes upon the forecited words of Saint *Ambroſe*.

I think it appears evident from theſe few Inſtances that the Primitive Chriſtians us'd a poſture of adoration at the Communion in the act of receiving. It were eaſy to bring a cloud of other Witneſſes, if it were neceſſary ſo to do, either to prove or clear the Cauſe in hand: but ſince there is no need to clog the Diſcourſe with numerous References and Appeals to Antiquity, it wou'd but obſcure the Argument, and tend in all

(*t*) *Phil. Mornay du Pleſſis* de Miſſa, *l.* 4. *c.* 7. *p.* 732.

likeli-

likelihood rather to confound and diſtaſte, than convince and gratify the Reader.

By what has been already alledg'd, the practice of our Church in Kneeling at the Sacrament is ſufficiently juſtify'd, as agreeable to the Cuſtoms and Practice of pure and Primitive Chriſtianity. For if the Ancients did at the Sacrament uſe a Poſture of Worſhip and Adoration, (which is very plain they did) then Kneeling is not repugnant to the practice of the Church in the firſt and pureſt Ages; no, tho' we ſhou'd ſuppoſe that Kneeling was never practis'd among them: which will be plain, if we caſt our Eyes a little upon that heavy Charge which ſome of the fierceſt, but leſs prudent Adverſaries of Kneeling have exhibited againſt it. They object againſt Kneeling, as being an adoring Geſture; for they affirm, (*u*) *That to kneel in the act of Receiving, before the conſecrated Bread and Wine, is formal Idolatry. So alſo to kneel before any Creature as a memorative object of God, tho' there be no intention of giving Divine Adoration to that Creature, is Idolatry.* Now if the Primitive Chriſtians may be ſuppos'd to proſtrate themſelves before the Altar upon their firſt approach to it in order to Receive, or immediately after they had Receiv'd the Bread and the Cup from the Hand of the Miniſter; or if they bow'd their Heads and Bodies after a lowly manner, in the act of Receiving; or if they receiv'd it ſtanding upright, and ate and drank at the Holy Table with their Hands and Eyes lifted up to Heaven; then they incurr'd the Guilt of Idolatry, as well as we who Kneel at the Lords ſupper, in the Judgment of thoſe

(*u*) *Gilleſp.* p. 166, 172. Altar. Damaſ. p. 801. *Rutherf.* Divine Right of Ch. Gov. c. 1. Qu. 5. Sect. 1. 3.

Scotch Caſuiſts; and by Conſequence, Kneeling at the Bleſſed Sacrament according to the Cuſtom of our Church, is not contrary to the practice of the Chriſtian Church in the firſt and pureſt Ages. For all thoſe Poſtures before mention'd were Poſtures of Worſhip and Adoration, and us'd as ſuch by the Primitive Chriſtians; eſpecially ſtanding, which is allow'd by the (*w*) Patrons of ſitting, to be anciently and generally us'd in time of Divine Worſhip, and particularly in the act of Receiving.

To conclude all with an Inſtance in their own Caſe about a common Table-Geſture, let us ſuppoſe the Primitive Chriſtians in ſome places did receive the Holy Sacrament ſitting, or lying along upon Beds, according to the ancient Cuſtom in thoſe Eaſtern Countries, at their common and ordinary Tables; let us put the caſe that in other places they ſate croſs-legg'd on Carpets at the Sacrament, as the *Perſians* and *Turks* eat at this day; or that they receiv'd ſtanding in other places, after the common mode of Feaſting; which we will ſuppoſe only at preſent. Cou'd any Man now object with reaſon againſt the lawfulneſs of ſitting upright at the Sacrament upon a Form or Chair (according to the Cuſtom of *England*,) as being contrary to the Practice of all the Ancients, who never ſate at all? No certainly. For tho' they differ from the Ancients as to the ſite of their Bodies, and the particular manner of Receiving; yet they all conſent in this, that they receive in a common Table-Geſture. They all obſerve the ſame Geſture at the Sacrament, that they conſtantly obſerv'd at their Civil

(*w*) *Gilleſp.* Diſp. againſt E. Po. C.T. p. 101. Diſp. of Kneel. p. 93.

Feaſts

Feaſts and ordinary Entertainments in the ſeveral places of their abode. And ſo ſay I in the preſent Caſe; What tho' the Primitive Chriſtians ſtood upright ſome of them at the Sacrament, and others bow'd their Heads and Bodies in the act of Receiving, and none of them ever us'd Kneeling? Yet they and we do very well agree for all that, becauſe we all receive in an adoring or worſhipping Poſture. It is one and the ſame thing variouſly expreſt, according to the modes of the different Countries.

Fifthly, and laſtly, I am to Prove, that *Kneeling is not therefore unlawful, becauſe 'twas firſt introduced by Idolaters, and is ſtill notoriouſly abus'd by the Papiſts to Idolatrous ends and purpoſes.* This will appear, if we conſider, 1. That it can never be prov'd, that *Kneeling* in the act of receiving was brought in by Idolaters, as is pretended. 2. That 'tis not ſinful to uſe ſuch things, as are or have been notoriouſly abus'd to Idolatry.

I. Then, it can never be prov'd, that *Kneeling* in the act of receiving was brought in by Idolaters. I have already made it very probable, that the Primitive Chriſtians receiv'd the Sacrament *Kneeling*; and I hope our *Diſſenters* will not charge them with Idolatry. I know, that they pretend the Kneeling-poſture was brought in by *Honorius* the *Third*; but that which he brought in, was a reverent Bow to the Sacrament, when the Prieſt elevates the Patten or Chalice, or when the Hoſt is carry'd to any Sick Perſon; and not any Kneeling in the act of receiving. For theſe are the very words of the Decree, (*x*) *That the Prieſts ſhou'd*

(*x*) Decret. *Greg.* l. 3. tit. 41. c. 10.

frequently inſtruct their People to Bow themſelves reverently at the Elevation of the Hoſt, when Maſs was celebrated, and in like manner when the Prieſt carry'd it abroad to the Sick. Nay, as Biſhop *Stillingfleet* (*y*) ſaies, *tho' Kneeling at the Elevation of the Hoſt be ſtrictly requir'd by the* Roman *Church, yet in the act of receiving it is not; as manifeſtly appears by the Pope's manner of receiving, which is not Kneeling, but either Sitting, as it was in* Bonaventure's *time; or after the faſhion of Sitting, or a little Leaning upon his Throne, as he doth at this day.*

If any ſhou'd ask, when the Geſture of *Kneeling* came in, I confeſs I cannot *certainly* tell: but this is no Argument *againſt*, but rather *for* the ancient and univerſal uſe of it. Novel-cuſtoms are eaſily traced to their Originals: but generally we cannot tell from whence the moſt ancient uſages of any Country are deriv'd.

However, I am ſo far from thinking (as our *Diſſenters* do) that Kneeling owes its birth to the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*, that I verily believe that the Kneeling or Adoring poſture us'd by the ancient Chriſtians in the act of receiving, did very much (among other things) conduce to beget and nurſe up in the minds of ſuperſtitious and fanciful Men, a conceit, that *Chriſt* was really and corporally preſent at the Sacrament; which Notion, by ſubtil and inquiſitive heads, was in a little time improv'd and explain'd after this manner: That after the Elements of Bread and Wine were conſecrated, they were thereby chang'd into the ſubſtance of *Chriſt*'s natural Body and Blood. This I am ſure of, that the Patrons

(*y*) *Unreaſonab. of Separat.* p. 15.

of

of *Tranſubſtantiation* did very early make uſe of this very Argument, to prove that they taught and believ'd no more than the Primitive Biſhops and Chriſtians did. For what elſe cou'd they intend or mean (ſay they) by that extraordinary Reverence and Devotion, which they manifeſted when they receiv'd the dreadful Myſteries (as they call'd the Bread and Wine) if they were bare and empty Signs only, and not chang'd into the very Body and Blood of *Chriſt*? Which is in effect the very Argument us'd by (*z*) *Algerus*, a ſtout Champion for *Tranſubſtantiation*. And (*a*) *Coſtor*, another *Popiſh* Writer, is ſo far from ſaying, even after *Tranſubſtantiation* took place, that the *Pope* introduced it, that he reſolves it into an ancient Cuſtom continu'd from the Apoſtles times. But,

II. Suppoſe it were otherwiſe, yet 'tis not ſinful to uſe ſuch things, as are or have been notoriouſly abus'd to Idolatry, as I ſhall ſhew in the next Chapter. I ſhall only obſerve at preſent, that if it be ſinful to kneel at the Sacrament, becauſe that Geſture has been, and is notoriouſly abus'd by *Papiſts* to Idolatrous ends; then Sitting is alſo ſinful, which is contended for with ſo much Zeal. For the *Pope* himſelf ſits, in the act of receiving, as was before noted; and that for the ſame Reaſon (ſaies a (*b*) *Popiſh* Author) which our *Diſſenters* urge for Sitting, *viz.* becauſe the Apoſtles ſate at the firſt Inſtitution of the Sacrament. And every Prieſt by the order of the *Maſs-Book*, is to partake ſtanding at the Altar, and not Kneeling there. Nay, if Kneeling be unlawful, becauſe it has been abus'd to Idolatry; then we muſt ne-

(*z*) *Alger.* de Sacramentis, l. 2. c. 3. (*a*) *Coſtor.* Enchirid. p. 353. *Edit.* 1590. (*b*) *Alex. Hales* de Miſſa, *p.* 2. *queſt.* 10. *p.* 4.

ver receive the Holy Sacrament. For we muſt receive in ſome convenient poſture, ſuch as *Kneeling*, *Sitting*, *Diſcumbing*, *Standing*; and yet every one of theſe, either has been or is, notoriouſly abus'd by *Heathens* and *Papiſts* to Idolatrous ends.

I hope, I need not add, that it wou'd be very unjuſt, to ſay, that our Kneeling is an act of Worſhip to the outward Elements; when the Church has declar'd this to be *Idolatry to be Abhorr'd of all Faithful Chriſtians.*

I ſhall conclude this Chapter with the opinions of the *Diſſenting* Writers. Mr. *Tombes* has undertaken to ſhew, that whatever the Geſture of our Saviour was, yet we are not obliged to it, *Theod.* p. 168. 'Tis granted by Mr. *Bains*, Chriſtian Lett. 24. and Mr. *Bayly*, Diſſwaſ. *c.* 2, 6. that the nature of the Ordinance do's not make Sitting neceſſary, or forbid Kneeling; and Mr. *Bains*, *ibid.* grants that Kneeling is not Idolatrous; and Mr. *Cartwright*, who thought it inconvenient, yet did not think it unlawful, *Harmon.* on *Luke*, 22. 14. Laſtly, Mr. *Baxter*, Chriſtian Dir. part 2. *p.* 111. *queſt.* 3. *ſect.* 40. ſaies, *For Kneeling, I never heard any thing yet to prove it unlawful. If there be any thing, it muſt be either ſome Word of God, or the nature of the Ordinance which is ſuppos'd to be contradicted. But,* 1. *there is no Word of God for any Geſture, nor againſt any.* Chriſt's *Example can never be prov'd to oblige us more in this, than in many circumſtances, that are confeſs'd not obligatory; as that he deliver'd but to Miniſters, and but to a Family, to Twelve, and after Supper, and on a* Thurſday-*night, and in an upper-room,* &c. *and his Geſture was not ſuch a Sitting as ours. And,* 2. *for the nature of the Ordinance, it is mixt: and if it be lawful to take a Pardon from the King upon our Knees, I know not what*

what can make it unlawful to take a Seal'd Pardon from Chriſt *(by his Embaſſador) upon our Knees.*

CHAP. VIII.

The Objection of our Symbolizing or Agreeing with the Church of Rome *Anſwer'd.*

BUT, ſay the *Diſſenters,* there is ſo great an agreement between your Church and the Church of *Rome*, that we cannot think communion with your Church to be Lawful. They tell us, that our firſt Reformers were indeed excellent and worthy Perſons for the times they liv'd in; that what they did was very commendable, and a good Beginning; but they were forced to comply with the neceſſities of the Age, which wou'd not bear a compleat Reformation. They left a great deal of *Popiſh* traſh in the Church, hoping by degrees to reconcile the *Papiſts* to it, or at leaſt, that they might not make the Breach too wide, and too much prejudice or enſtrange them from it: but we now live under better means, have greater Light and Knowledge, and ſo a further and more perfect amendment is now neceſſary.

Now I cannot but inwardly reverence the Judgment, as well as love the Temper of our firſt Reformers, who in their firſt Separations from *Rome*, were not nice or ſcrupulous beyond the juſt reaſons of things. Doubtleſs they were in earneſt enough, as to all true Zeal againſt the Corruptions of *that Church*, when they Seal'd the well-grounded offence they took at them, with their warmeſt Blood; and cheerfully underwent all the hardſhips that the Primitive Chriſtians ſignaliz'd their Profeſſion with,

with, rather than they wou'd intermix with *Rome*, in any uſage of Worſhip or Article of Faith, that had the leaſt ſavour of Idolatry, Superſtition, or falſe Religion at all in it. And yet theſe Holy and Wiſe Men, when they had the Power and Opportunity of Reforming wholly in their hands, being equally jealous of *Enthuſiaſm*, as they were of *Superſtition*, wou'd not give themſelves up to thoſe *fantaſtic Antipathies*, as to aboliſh this or that Ceremony, merely becauſe it had been in uſe among the *Papiſts*, if ſome other very ſubſtantial Reaſon did not plead againſt it. And verily, had they not alwaies us'd theſe temperate and unbyaſs'd methods of Reformation, they wou'd not ſo eaſily have juſtify'd themſelves to their Adverſaries, or the World; or have made it ſo evident (as by their Wiſe management they did) that what was done by them, was from the mere urgencies of Conſcience and Reaſon, and not the wantonneſs of Change and Innovation. So that, where any mean honeſtly (as I doubt not but many of thoſe do, that Diſſent from us) they ought to have their Reaſon very well awake, that the mere charge of *Popery* upon any diſputed point, may not ſo prejudice them in their enquiries into things, as to leave no room for mature Conſideration.

However, that I may fully anſwer this objection, drawn from our agreement with the Church of *Rome*, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, 1. That *there is a vaſt diſtance between the Churches of* England *and* Rome. 2. That *a Church's Symbolizing or agreeing in ſome things with the Church of* Rome, *is no warrant for ſeparation from the Church ſo agreeing.* 3. That *the agreement between the Churches of* England *and* Rome, *is in no wiſe ſuch, as will make Com-*

Communion with the Church of England *unlawful.*

I. Then, I ſhall ſhew that *there is a vaſt diſtance between the Churches of* England *and* Rome; as appears by our Church's having renounced all Communion with *Rome*, and utterly caſt off the *Pope*'s Power. But I ſhall deſcend to particulars, and ſhew the vaſt diſtance between them,

Firſt, In all thoſe Doctrines and Practices, whereby the Church of Rome *deprives her Members of their due Liberty, and miſerably enſlaves them.* For, 1. She denies them all judgment of diſcretion in matters of Religion, and binds them all, under pain of damnation, to *Believe* her infallible: but our Church permits us to *prove all things*, that we may *hold faſt that which is good*; ſhe diſclaims all pretence to *infallibility*, and owns her ſelf to be obnoxious to error in matters of Faith. 2. The Church of *Rome* impoſes a moſt ſlaviſh drudgery in the vaſt multitudes of vain and childiſh, odd and uncouth Rites and Ceremonies, which a Man wou'd wonder how they cou'd invent. The like may be ſaid of their cruel Penances, in impoſing of which the Prieſts are arbitrary. But our Rites are exceeding *few, plain, eaſy, grave and manly*; founded on the Practice of the Church, long before *Popery* appear'd in the World. Our Sacraments are but two; and conſequently we are not burden'd with the ſuperſtitious Fopperies of the other five *Popiſh* ones. In ſhort, our *Rites* are agreeable to the Rules of *doing things decently, and in order*, and *doing all things to Edification.* Nor do's our Church impoſe them (like the Church of *Rome*) as neceſſary, and as parts of Religion, but as merely *indifferent* and *changeable* things. As for our *Penances*, 'tis needleſs to ſhew that they are not cruel, like thoſe of

of *Rome*. 3. The Church of *Rome* ſubjects her Members by ſeveral of her Doctrines to enſlaving paſſions. For inſtance, *Purgatory* ſubjects them to *fear*, and *auricular confeſſion* to *ſhame*, and *the dependence of the efficacy of the Sacraments upon the Prieſt's intention* expoſes them to great *anxiety*. But our Church rejects the Doctrines of *Purgatory*, and the *dependence of the efficacy of the Sacraments upon the Prieſt's intention*; and do's not oblige her Members to Confeſs their ſins to Men, but when for the relief of their Conſciences, or making ſatisfaction, *&c.* it is their duty ſo to do. 4. The Church of *Rome* maintains Licentious Principles and Practices, which our Adverſaries cannot charge upon the Church of *England*.

Secondly, *In all thoſe Doctrines and Practices in which the Church of* Rome *is juſtly charg'd with plainly contradicting the Scripture*. For inſtance, our Church rejects and utterly abhors the *Popiſh* Doctrines and Practices of *Image-worſhip, invocation of Saints, Tranſubſtantiation, Pardons, Indulgences, Sacrifice of the Maſs, denying the Bible to the Vulgar, Prayers and Sacraments in an unknown Tongue, robbing the Laity of the Cup in the Lord's Supper, prohibiting Marriage to Prieſts, Merit, Superogation, making ſimple Fornication a mere venial ſin, damning all that are not of her Communion*, &c. Nor is there any Church, that more ſeverely condemns all inſtances of unrighteouſneſs and immorality, than the Church of *England* do's.

Thirdly, *In their public Prayers and Offices*. To ſhew this in all particulars wou'd be a tedious task; therefore I ſhall inſtance only in the office of *Infant-Baptiſm*, by which the Reader may judge of the reſt.

Before

Before they go into the Church, after many preparatory preſcriptions, the Prieſt being dreſt in a Surplice and purple Robe, calls the Infant, ſaying, *what askeſt thou*, &c. the Godfather anſwers, *Faith.* P. *What ſhalt thou get by Faith?* G. *Eternal Life.* P. *If thou therefore*, &c. Then the Prieſt blows three gentle puffs upon the Infant's face, and ſaies, *Go out of him, O unclean Spirit*, &c. Then Croſſing the Infant's Forehead and Breaſt, he ſaith, *Receive the ſign of the Croſs*, &c. Then he praies that *God would alwaies*, &c. And after a long Prayer (the Prieſt laying his Hand on the Infant's Head) comes the idle and profane Form of the *Benediction of Salt*; viz. *I conjure thee, O creature of Salt, in the Name*, &c. with many Croſſings. Then he puts a little Salt into the Infant's mouth, ſaying, *Take thou the Salt of Wiſdom*; (and adds moſt impiouſly) *be it thy Propitiation unto Eternal Life.* After the *Pax tecum* he praies, *that this Infant*, &c. Then the Devil is conjur'd again, and moſt wofully be-call'd. Then the Prieſt Croſſes the Infant's Forehead, ſaying, *And this ſign*, &c. Then he puts his Hand on the Infant's Head, and puts up a very good Prayer.

Then he puts part of his Robe upon the Infant, and brings him within the Church, ſaying, *Enter thou*, &c. Then follow the *Apoſtles Creed* and the *Paternoſter.* Then the Devil is conjur'd again; and the Prieſt takes ſpittle out of his mouth, and therewith touches the Infant's Ears and Noſtrils, ſaying, &c. Then he conjures the Devil again, ſaying, *Be packing, O Devil*, &c. Then he asks the Infant, whether he renounces the *Devil*, &c. Then dipping his Thumb in *Holy Oyl*, and anointing the Infant with it in his Breaſt and betwixt his ſhoulders, he ſaies, *I anoint thee*, &c.

Then

Then he puts off his *Purple* Robe, and puts on another of *White* colour, and having ask'd four more queſtions, and receiv'd the anſwers, he pours water thrice upon the Child's Head, as he recites over it our Saviour's Form of Baptiſm. Then dipping his Thumb in the *Chriſm* or *Holy Ointment*, he anoints the Infant upon the Crown of his Head in the figure of a Croſs, and praies, *O God Omnipotent*, &c. Afterwards he takes a white linnen cloth, and putting it on the Child's Head, ſaies, *Take the white garment*, &c. Laſtly, he puts into the Child's or his God-Father's Hand, a lighted Candle, ſaying, *Receive the burning Lamp*, &c. Beſides thoſe things which are in the *Common Ritual*, there are divers others added in the *Paſtorale*, which I ſhall not mention. And now, if any Man will read our *Office of Baptiſm*, he will acknowledge, that no two things can be more unlike, than *theſe* two Offices are.

Our *Litany* indeed has been Condemn'd by *Diſſenters*, as ſavouring of *Popiſh* Superſtition; but nothing is more falſe, if a Man compares it with the *Popiſh* one, the greater part of which conſiſts in invocations of Saints and Angels. But the Brevity I am confin'd to in this Diſcourſe, will not permit me to abide any longer upon this Argument.

Fourthly, *In the Books they receive for Canonical.* For the Church of *Rome* takes all the *Apocryphal* Books into the Canon: but the Church of *England* takes only thoſe, which the Primitive Church and all Proteſtants acknowledge. 'Tis true, ſhe reads ſome part of the *Apocryphal* Books for inſtruction of manners: but ſhe do's not eſtabliſh any Doctrine by them.

Fifthly,

Fifthly and *Laſtly, in the Authority on which they found their whole Religion.* The Church of *Rome* founds the Authority of the *Scriptures* upon her own infallibility; and the Authority of many of her own Doctrines on unwritten traditions and the Decrees of her Councils, which ſhe will have to be no leſs inſpir'd than the *Prophets* and *Apoſtles:* but the Church of *England* builds her whole Religion upon *Scripture*, which is her rule of Faith and Practice. She Reverences ancient general Councils: but do's not think them infallible. And as for that *Authority*, which our Church claims *in Controverſies of Faith*, by requiring ſubſcription to 39 Articles, 'tis plain that ſhe means no more Authority, than to oblige her Members to outward ſubmiſſion, when her deciſions do not contradict any eſſentials of *Faith* or *Manners*; but not an authority to oblige Men to believe them infallibly true; and this is neceſſary for the Peace of any Church. 'Tis true, ſhe thinks it convenient, that none ſhould receive Orders, be admitted to Benefices, &c. but ſuch as do believe them, not all as Articles of our Faith, but many as inferiour truths; and ſhe requires Subſcription as a Teſt of this belief: but the Church of *Rome* requires all Perſons under pain of damnation to believe all her falſe and wicked Doctrines, as much as the moſt undoubted Articles of Faith; as may be ſeen in the *Creed* of *Pius* the fourth.

As to the Motives which our Church propoſes for our belief of the Doctrine of the *Holy Scriptures*, they are ſuch as are found in the *Scriptures* themſelves; *viz.* the excellency of them, and the Miracles which confirm them: and as to the truth of the Matters of fact, ſhe places it (not in the teſtimony of any particular Church, but)

in the *Universal Tradition* of *Jews* and *Pagans*, as well as of all *Christians*.

II. I am to shew, that *a Church's symbolizing or agreeing in some things with the Church of* Rome, *is no warrant for separation from the Church so agreeing*. The *Dissenters* tell us, that those things which are indifferent in their own nature, do cease to be indifferent and become sinful, if they have been us'd by the Church of *Rome*. For, say they, we read, *Lev.* 18. 2. *After the doings of the Land of Egypt wherein ye dwell, shall ye not do, and after the doings of the Land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do, neither shall ye walk in their Ordinances*. Now, not to insist on the vast difference of our circumstances from those of the *Israelites*, I answer, that it is an absurd thing to imagin, that the *Israelites* were so bound up by God, as to be obliged to be unlike those People in all their actions. The things forbidden from *verse 5th.* to *24th.* are not Indifferent, but *Incestuous Copulations and acts of uncleaness*; and God do's expresly enough restrain that general Prohibition to those particulars, in saying, *v. 24th. Defile not your selves in any part of these things, for in all these the Nations are defil'd, which I cast out before you*. And they were therefore forbidden under the notion of things done after the doings of the *Egyptians* and the *Canaanites*, because they were the doings of those People, whom they were exceedingly prone to imitate, even in their greatest immoralities.

If it be said, that in other places God forbids the *Israelites* to imitate the *Heathens* in things of an indifferent nature; I answer, 1. That supposing this were so, it do's not from thence follow, that God intended to forbid such imitations in this place;

place; the contrary being ſo manifeſt as we have ſeen. But, 2. That God has any where prohibited the *Iſraelites* to ſymbolize with *Heathens*, in things of a mere indifferent and innocent nature; I mean, that he has made it unlawful for them to obſerve any ſuch Cuſtoms of the *Heathens*, merely upon the account of their being *like them*, is a very great miſtake: Which will appear by conſidering thoſe places which are produced for it. One is *Deut.* 14. 2. *You ſhall not cut your ſelves, nor make any baldneſs between your Eyes for the dead.* Now, as to the former of theſe prohibited things, who ſees not, that 'tis unnatural, and therefore not indifferent? And as to the latter, *viz.* the diſfiguring of themſelves by cutting off their Eye-brows, this was not merely indifferent neither; it being a Cuſtom at Funerals misbecoming the People of God; and which wou'd make them look as if they *ſorrow'd for the Dead* as Men without Hope. Another place is *Lev.* 19. 19. *Thou ſhalt not let thy Cattel gender with a diverſe Kind; thou ſhalt not ſow thy Ground with mingled Seed; nor ſhall a garment of linnen and woollen come upon thee.* But I anſwer, that tho' theſe things are indeed indifferent in their own nature, yet they are forbidden (not becauſe the *Heathens* us'd them, but) becauſe they were myſtical inſtructions in moral duties.

If it be objected alſo, that God forbad the *Jews*, *Hoſ.* 2. 16, 17. to call him by the Name of *Baali*, which was a very good Name and ſignify'd only *My Lord*, becauſe that word was abus'd in being the name of the Idol *Baal*; I anſwer, that God did not forbid the Name *Baali*, becauſe an *Idol* was call'd by that Name; for he is call'd *Baal* in other places of the *Hebrew Bible*,

and alſo *Jah*, which the *Heathens* us'd for an *Idol*: but becauſe the word *Baali* ſignifies an *unkind husband* or *Lord*, ſuch as *Baal* was to his worſhippers; whereas God Promiſes he wou'd be call'd *Iſhi*, that is, a *tenderly-loving husband*; for he deſign'd to be kind to his People *Iſrael*. I ſhall add, that *Baalim* in the next *verſe* ſignifies *Idols*, which God there Promiſes to deſtroy. But, ſuppoſe that God forbad the *Jews* to call him *Baal* for the future, yet it might be becauſe of their vehement inclination to the worſhip of *Baal*, leſt by uſing it they ſhou'd be tempted to worſhip him again: whereas our Ceremonies were us'd by the ancient Fathers without any *Superſtition* or *Idolatry*, and we are not in danger of returning to *Popery* by retaining them.

Well; but they ſay, it appears from *Scripture-precepts* and *examples*, that it is unlawful to ſymbolize with the Church of *Rome* in things, that have been *notoriouſly abus'd in Idolatrous and groſly Superſtitious Services*. To this Ianſwer,

Firſt, that it is not ſinful to uſe thoſe things which have been abus'd to Idolatry, as I ſhall prove by theſe following Arguments.

1. No abuſe of any Geſture, tho' it be in the moſt manifeſt Idolatry, doth render that Geſture ſimply evil, and for ever after unlawful to be us'd in the Worſhip of God upon that account. For the abuſe of a thing ſuppoſes the lawful uſe of it; and if any thing otherwiſe lawful becomes ſinful by an abuſe of it, then it's plain that it is not in it's own nature ſinful, but by accident, and with reſpect to ſomewhat elſe. This is clear from *Scripture*; for if Rites and Ceremonies, after they have been abus'd by Idolaters, become abſolutely evil, and unlawful to be us'd at all; then the *Jews* ſinn'd

ſinn'd in *offering Sacrifice*, erecting *Altars*, burning *Incenſe* to the God of Heaven, *bowing down* themſelves before him, wearing a *Linnen Garment* in the time of Divine Worſhip, and obſerving other Things and Rites which the *Heathens* obſerv'd in the worſhip of their falſe gods.

If the *Diſſenters* ſay, they except all ſuch Rites as were commanded or approv'd of by God; I reply, that ſuch an exception avails nothing. For if the abuſe of a thing to Idolatry makes it abſolutely ſinful, and unlawful to be us'd at all, then it's impoſſible to deſtroy that Relation, and what has been once abus'd, muſt ever remain ſo; that is, an infinite Power can't undo what has been done, and clear it from ever having been abus'd. And therefore I conclude from the Command and Approbation of God, that a bare conformity with Idolaters in uſing thoſe Rites in the Worſhip of the true God, which they practiſe in the worſhip of Idols, is not ſimply ſinful, or formal Idolatry. For if it be; God had obliged the Children of *Iſrael* by his expreſs Command to commit ſin, and to do what he ſtrictly and ſeverely prohibited in other places. In truth, ſuch a Poſition wou'd plainly make God the Author of ſin.

2. This principle intrenches upon *Chriſtian liberty*, if St. *Paul* himſelf may judge, who tells us, 1 *Cor.* 10. 25, &c. that *to the pure all things are pure*; and affirms it lawful to eat of ſuch things as had been offer'd up in Sacrifice to Idols, and *to eat whatſoever was ſold in the Shambles*. And what reaſon is there, why a Geſture ſhou'd be more defil'd by Idolaters, than Meat which they had Offer'd up in Sacrifice to Idols? and why ſhou'd one be ſinful and Idolatrous to uſe, and not the other? Certainly St. *Paul* wou'd never have granted them ſuch a privilege,

if he judg'd it Idolatrous to uſe what Idolaters had abus'd: eſpecially conſidering that he in the ſame Chapter exhorts them earneſtly to *fly from Idolatry*.

3. This Principle ſubjects the Minds of Chriſtians to infinite fears, ſcruples and perplexities: whereas the true and great deſign of the Goſpel, is to breed in Men a filial cheerful frame of heart, the *ſpirit of love, and of a ſound* or quiet *mind*; to give us a free, eaſy, comfortable acceſs to God as to our Father; and to encourage every good Man to a diligent, conſtant, and frequent attendance upon his Worſhip, by the delight that follows it. But now, if nothing may be us'd by us without highly offending God, that either has been, or is abus'd to Idolatry; who ſees not what trouble and diſtraction will ariſe in our Minds hereupon, when we meet together to worſhip God? It's well known that moſt of our *Churches* were erected by *Idolatrous Papiſts*, and as much defil'd by Idolatry as any Geſture can be. They are dedicated to ſeveral *Saints* and *Angels*, whoſe Images were once ſet up and ador'd. Our *Bells*, *Pews*, *Fonts*, *Desks*, *Church-yards*, have been conſecrated after a ſuperſtitious manner. Many *Cups*, *Flagons*, *Diſhes*, *Communion-Tables*, have been given and us'd by Idolaters. What now is to be done? Perhaps all theſe things have been abus'd; and if certain information cannot be had, we can't worſhip in public without great diſquiet of Mind.

4. This Principle will deſtroy all public Worſhip. For if nothing muſt be us'd which has been, or is abus'd by Idolaters; it will be in the power of Idolaters, by ingroſſing all the outward marks and

and ſigns of that inward veneration and eſteem which we owe to God, to ſmother our Devotions, ſo as they ſhall never appear in the World; and by that means fruſtrate the very end and deſign of Religious Aſſemblies. And truly this work is already, by the ſtrength of this Principle, very well effected. For *kneeling* at Prayers, and *ſtanding* and *ſitting*, and lifting up the Hands and Eyes to Heaven, and bowing of the Body, together with Prayer and Praiſe and Singing, have been all notoriouſly abus'd to Idolatry, and are ſo to this day. If the *Diſſenters* ſay, they except ſuch things as are neceſſary to be us'd in the Service of God, tho' they have been abus'd by Idolaters; I reply, that ſo long as the reaſons hold to make any thing ſinful, ſo long it is ſo. If the uſe or abuſe of any thing by Idolaters make it ſimply evil; then it muſt for ever remain ſo, and no neceſſity whatſoever can make it lawful. So that this Principle drives us into ſuch ſtreights, that we muſt ſin one way or other. For either we muſt not worſhip God in public, or we muſt be guilty of *Idolatry* if we do: and tho' of two Evils or Calamities the leaſt is to be choſen, yet of two Sins neither is. Chriſtian Religion flows from infinite Wiſdom; and the Laws of God do not croſs one another, but are even and conſiſtent. We are never caſt by God under a neceſſity of ſinning, of tranſgreſſing one Law by the obſervance of another: but thus it muſt be, if we take up and ſtick to this Principle.

5. The *Diſſenters* condemn themſelves in what they allow and practiſe, by the ſame Rule by which they condemn kneeling at the Sacrament, and other Rites of our Church. For they themſelves did uſe, without ſcruple, ſuch *Places* and

Things and *Poſtures* as had been defil'd and abus'd by *Idolaters*. They were wont to be bare-headed in time of Divine Worſhip, at Prayer and at the Sacrament; and ſo do Idolatrous *Papiſts*. They never affirm'd, that it was ſinful to kneel at our Prayers, both public and private; yet this Geſture the *Papiſts* uſe in their Prayers to the *Virgin Mary*, to the *Croſs*, to *Saints* and *Angels*. They us'd our Churches, Church-yards, and Bells, and never thought they ſinn'd againſt God by ſo doing; tho' they knew they had been abus'd. Nay, the *Directory* (*a*) declares, *That ſuch places are not ſubject to any ſuch Pollution by any Superſtition formerly us'd, and now laid aſide, as may render them unlawful and inconvenient.* Mr. *Rutherford* (*b*) ſaies of Bells groſly abus'd in time of Popery, *That it is unreaſonable and groundleſs, that thereupon they ſhould be diſus'd.* Upon which the Reverend Dr. *Falkner* has this judicious Remark; The pretence of their convenient uſefulneſs would be no better excuſe on their behalf, than was the Plea for ſparing the beſt of the *Amalekites* Cattel, that they might be a Sacrifice, when God had devoted them to Deſtruction. For if God (as they ſay) had commanded, that all ſuch Things and Rites ſhou'd be utterly aboliſh'd, as were of Man's deviſing and had been abus'd to Idolatry; then the convenient uſefulneſs of ſuch Places and things will never bear them out.

6. If this Principle were true, it wou'd go nigh to throw a ſcorn upon all or moſt of the Reformations that have been made from the *Church of*

(*a*) Direct. of the day and place of worſhip. (*b*) *Rutherf.* of Scandal, Q. 5. 6.

Rome;

Rome; for they do not ſeem to have govern'd themſelves by this Rule. Some of them in their public Confeſſions (*c*) declaring, that they might lawfully retain ſuch Rites and Ceremonies as are of advantage to Faith, the Worſhip of God, or Peace and Order in the Church, *tho' they had been introduced by any Synod, or Biſhop, or Pope, or any other.*

7. Nay, this Principle wou'd render *Chriſtianity* impracticable; becauſe there is no Circumſtance, no Inſtrument, no Miniſtry in Worſhip, but may have been ſome way or other abus'd by *Pagan* or *Romiſh Idolatries*. It wou'd make every Garment, of what ſhape, or of what colour ſoever, unfit for uſe in our Religious Service; for not only the White, but the Red, the Green, and the Black, have been us'd (even for the ſignificancy of their reſpective Colours) by the *Gentile* or *Romaniſt*, to very ſuperſtitious purpoſes in Divine Worſhip.

Secondly, There is no expreſs Precept of this nature, and the Texts alledg'd do not infer it. For, 1. Tho' ſome Churches are blam'd for ſuffering ſome to teach the People to *eat things ſacrificed to Idols*, Rev. 2. 14, 20. yet the inſtance is impertinent, becauſe that was no better than Communicating in Idol-worſhip, as the *Gnoſtics* did. But St. *Paul* declares, 1 *Cor.* 8. and *chap.* 10. 27, 28, 29. that *eating things offer'd to Idols without any reſpect to Idols in eating* is unlawful upon no other account, but that of Scandal. 2. St. *Jude's* words, *v.* 23. *hating even the garment ſpotted by the fleſh*, teach us indeed to be as cautious of temptations to ſin, as of the Garments of infected

(*c*) Confeſſ. Bohem. *Art.* 15.

Perſons; but there is no danger, when they are well cleans'd from infection. 3. Tho' the *Jews* were commanded to deſtroy Idols and the appurtenances of them, *Deut.* 7. 25, 26. *Iſ.* 20. 22. becauſe they were ſo prodigiouſly inclin'd to Idolatry; yet ſurely the *Diſſenters* will not ſay, we muſt deſtroy all things that have been abus'd to ſuperſtitious uſes; for then we muſt deſtroy our Bells and Fonts and Churches. *Therefore*, as Mr. *Calvin*, upon the *Second* Commandment, ſaies, *We do not in the leaſt ſcruple, whether we may lawfully uſe thoſe Temples, Fonts and other Materials, which have been heretofore abus'd to Idolatrous and Superſtitious uſes. I acknowledge indeed, that we ought to remove ſuch things as ſeem to nouriſh Idolatry; upon ſuppoſition, that we our ſelves in oppoſing too evidently things in their own nature indifferent, be not too ſuperſtitious. It is equally ſuperſtitious to condemn things indifferent as unholy, and to command them as if they were holy.*

As for the example of *Hezekiah*'s breaking in pieces the Brazen Serpent, becauſe the Children of *Iſrael* burnt Incenſe to it, 2 *Kings* 18. 4. it will not prove, that whatſoever has been notoriouſly defil'd in Idolatrous or groſly Superſtitious Services, ought to be aboliſh'd; and much leſs, that the not aboliſhing ſome ſuch things, is a good ground for ſeparation from the Church that neglects ſo to do. For,

1. The Brazen Serpent was not only defil'd, but an *Idol it ſelf*, and that at the very time when it was deſtroy'd. Nay, it was worſhipp'd by the generality of the People; *to thoſe daies the Children of Iſrael did burn Incenſe unto it*; and there was little hope of their being reclaim'd, while the Idol ſtood; and moreover, the uſe of it was ceas'd for

for which it was firſt erected. Now without doubt Governours ought to take away thoſe indifferent things which have been abus'd, when the People are inclin'd to abuſe them again; at leaſt, if ſuch abuſe cannot probably be prevented by any other means: but then I deny that our *Rites* have been or are any temptation to *Idolatry*, or to the embracing of *Popery*.

Had *Hezekiah* ſuffer'd the Brazen Serpent ſtill to ſtand, no doubt private Perſons (who have no Authority to make public Reformations) might lawfully have made uſe of it, to put them in mind of, and affect them with the wonderful mercy of God, expreſs'd by it to their Forefathers; notwithſtanding that many had formerly made an Idol of it, and did ſo at that very time. And much more might they have lawfully contínu'd in the Communion of the Church, ſo long as there was no conſtraint laid upon them to join with them in their Idolatry; nor do we read of any that ſeparated from the Church, while the Brazen Serpent was permitted to ſtand, as wofully abus'd as it was by the generality.

2. If *Example* were a good way of Arguing, we find by *Hezekiah*'s practice in *other* things, he did not think it an indiſpenſable Duty, to aboliſh every thing that had been made uſe of to Idolatry; if it did not prove an immediate ſnare at that time. For as to the *Temples*, which *Solomon* had erected for no other end but the Worſhip of *falſe Gods*, 1 *Kings* 11. 7. *Hezekiah* did not make it his buſineſs to deſtroy *them*, as being in his time forlorn and neglected things, of which no bad uſe was then made. Altho' indeed King *Joſiah* afterwards (probably upon the increaſe of Idolatry, and renew'd uſe of thoſe places)

ces) found it expedient to lay them wholly waſte, 2 *Kings* 23. 13. *Let not any*, ſays (*d*) *Calvin*, *think me ſo auſtere or bound up, as to forbid a Chriſtian without any exception, to accommodate himſelf to the* Papiſts *in any Ceremony or Obſervance; for it is not my purpoſe to condemn any thing, but what is clearly evil and openly vicious.*

III. I proceed now in the laſt place to ſhew, that *the Agreement between the Churches of* England *and* Rome *is in no wiſe ſuch, as will make Communion with the Church of* England *unlawful.* This I ſhall evince in the chief particulars, which our *Diſſenters* take offence at.

Firſt Then, *Epiſcopacy* is ſo far from being an unlawful ſymbolizing with the Church of *Rome*, that it is an Apoſtolical Inſtitution; and ſhall we allow the *Pope* ſo much power, as to make that unlawful by his uſe, which the Apoſtles and their Diſciples have recommended to us by theirs? Nay, (*e*) *Beza*, *P. du Moulin*, and *Calvin* grant, that this was the Goverment of all Churches in the World, from the Apoſtles times for about 1500 years together. Nor do I know how the *Diſſenters* will defend the Obſervation of the Lord's Day, while they contend that *Epiſcopacy* cannot be concluded from the uninterrupted tradition of the Church from the Apoſtles times: or how thoſe that ſeparate upon the account of *Epiſcopacy*, can defend the lawfulneſs of Communicating with any Chriſtian Church for about 1500 years together. I ſhall add no more upon this point; only I refer my Reader to *Chillingworth*'s Inſtitution of Epiſcopa-

(*d*) *De Vitand. Superſtitione.* (*e*) *Bez.* Epiſcop. *du Moul.* Paſt. off. *Calv.* Inſt. *lib.* 4. *cap.* 4. Sect. 2. & Epiſt. ad Reg. Pol.

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cy, and *Stillingfleet*'s Unreaſonableneſs of ſeparation, p. 244, &c.

Secondly, Our ſymbolizing with the Church of *Rome* in having ſet Forms of Prayer, is ſo far from being culpable, that 'tis highly commendable. For herein we ſymbolize with the Primitive Church; nor is any thing more expedient for the public Service of God, as I have already ſhewn in the *Third* Chapter. Now if the *Papiſts*, nay if the *Heathens* us'd ſet Forms, becauſe it was the fitteſt way for the Service of God; muſt we be forbidden to uſe them? Becauſe they did well, are we therefore to do worſe?

Thirdly, Our Liturgy in particular do's not ſo much ſymbolize with the *Roman* Service, as to cauſe a ſeparation. For tho' ſome Collects are taken out of the *Maſs-Book*; yet that is not enough to make them unlawful. For then the Lord's Prayer, the *Pſalms*, and a great part of the *Scripture* beſides, and the Creeds alſo muſt never be us'd.

I know it has been ſaid, that the *Scriptures* being of neceſſary uſe muſt be retain'd by us, tho' the Church of *Rome* retains them: but that there is not the ſame Reaſon for Forms, which are not neceſſary; and that in thoſe we ought to go as far from that Church as we can. But what reaſon is there for this? For the danger that may happen to us in coming too near them, lies in things wherein they do ill, and not in things wherein they do well. No Man can ſhew a good reaſon why thoſe Paſſages in the *Common-Prayer-Book*, which are to be found in the *Maſs-Book*, but which were us'd alſo by the Church before *Romaniſm* had corrupted it, are not as much to be valu'd, becauſe they were once us'd by good Chriſtians; as to be run down, becauſe they have been

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ſince us'd by Superſtitious and Idolatrous Men. If any Man wou'd ſet himſelf to expoſe the *Maſs-Book*, he wou'd, I ſuppoſe, lay hold upon nothing but the Corruptions that are in it, and things that are obnoxious to juſt reproof; not on things that are juſtifiable, and may eaſily be defended. And the Reaſon of this is plain, becauſe the *Maſs-Book* is to blame for thoſe parts of it only, but not for theſe.

Laſtly, Our ſymbolizing with the Church of *Rome* in the uſe of Ceremonies will not juſtify a ſeparation. For ours are ſcarce the hundredth part of hers: nor are ours impos'd as neceſſary. If it be ſaid, that Chriſt ſeverely condemn'd the *Jewiſh Traditions*; I anſwer that he condemn'd only thoſe by which they *made the commandments of God of none effect*, and in which they placed *ſpecial holineſs*.

But to deſcend to particulars; 1. The *Surplice* in the Church of *Rome* is ſolemnly hallow'd, &c. but we uſe it only for Diſtinction and Uniformity, and place no more holineſs in it, than in the hoods which denote Degrees. Beſides, in the Primitive Church Miniſters did officiate in White Garments; and *Beza* and *Calvin* were (*f*) againſt contending about the *Surplice*; and, *I pray, why is a* Miniſter's *Linnen Garment more* Popiſh, *than a Lawyer's Gown or a Judge's Robes?* Our famous *Hooker* (*g*) ſaies, *To ſolemn actions of Royalty and Juſtice, there ſutable Ornaments are a beauty; are they only in Religion a ſtain?* 2. The *Croſs in Baptiſm* is not us'd by us, as 'tis by the Church of *Rome*. She enjoins numberleſs Croſſings in the Admini-

(*f*) Cont. Weſtph. Vol. 1. p. 55. Epiſt. ad Bull. (*g*) *Eccleſ. Pol.* Book 5. 228.

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ſtration of that Sacrament; but we retain it in Conformity to the ancient practice, and have aboliſh'd all Superſtitious abuſes of it. 3. *Kneeling at the Sacrament* is requir'd by us, only as a reverent Geſture; and the abuſes of this kneeling in the Church of *Rome* are perfectly remov'd. The *Papiſts* indeed kneel to their Hoſt, as to their God: but we do nothing like them; for we kneel not *to* the Bread and Wine, but *at* our Receiving of them. Now what they do on no reaſon, why may not we do on the beſt? eſpecially when our Church declares, that Adoration of the of the Elements is *Idolatry to be abhorr'd of all faithful Chriſtians.* As we are not to diſuſe the Holy Sacrament, becauſe the *Papiſts* have made it an Idol: ſo we may continue our Reverence, tho' they have paid it Adoration. 4. The *Ring in Marriage* is moſt notoriouſly abus'd in the Church of *Rome*, as may be ſeen in their *Office:* but we practiſe no Superſtition about it, and uſe it (not as a Sacramental ſign, but) as a token of the Marriage Vow. *Laſtly*, The Feaſts and Faſts of our Church cannot be juſtly accounted *Popiſh.* For the time of Aſſembling is a Circumſtance of our Worſhip that cannot be left to particular choice, but muſt be determin'd in Common; and what is to be done at that time, muſt be determin'd too in an Ordinary orderly Aſſembly: ſo that it muſt be left to the diſcretion of the Governours, when we are to keep a Feſtival, and when a Faſt. As to the Keeping of the Lord's-Day, our Church was not at Liberty; unleſs ſhe wou'd have raſhly departed from Apoſtolical obſervation, and the continu'd practice of all Ages and Places ſince the beginning of Chriſtianity. As for the Keeping of *Eaſter*, ſhe was under the like Obligation;

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the Annual Feaſt of the Reſurrection, the Great Lord's-Day, being known to have been the Chief, and the Cauſe of all the Weekly. And as to the Faſt of Good Friday, it was nigh as early as the Feaſt of the Reſurrection. They lamented their Sins our Saviour died for on the Friday before, as conſtantly as they Commemorated His Riſing again for our Salvation the Sunday after. And in Order to the keeping of thoſe two Great Daies with more Devotion, there was likewiſe in the Church ſome time before-hand ſet apart, for better Recollection and greater Preparation; the number of Daies was in ſome places more, in ſome leſs. That of Forty, had obtain'd in the *Weſtern* Country; and therefore was ſtill kept: and wou'd to God it were as Religiouſly obſerv'd, as it was Piouſly appointed. *Whitſunday* too, the Day on which the Holy Ghoſt deſcended, was obſerv'd alwaies and Univerſally by the Ancient Church. Only the Nativity of our Saviour was of latter remembrance, but yet before *Popery* came in. 'Twas firſt obſerv'd in the *Weſtern* Church; and afterwards taken up by the *Eaſtern*, in St. *Chryſoſtom*'s time, as it ſtands recommended by him to the People of *Antioch*. Other times beſides theſe, have been appointed for our Religious Aſſemblies; in which, beſides the general Worſhip of God, the Examples of his Saints and Martyrs are gratefully remembred and piouſly propos'd. Thoſe Daies are call'd commonly by the Name of the Perſon then particularly Commemorated: Not that the Worſhip is to the Saint, or that the Day is imploy'd in his Honour; but becauſe on the occaſion of his Memory or Martyrdom we come together, as to pay our other Duties to our God, ſo to thank him for

for the Graces of his Servant, and to be Edify'd and Inſtructed by the Example. It is true, the Church heretofore, when God had been bountiful to them in the Number of his Saints, increas'd in ſome proportion the Daies of his Worſhip; and it is to be Confeſs'd that *Popery* had both acknowledg'd Saints to God, which he might not own, and gave the true Saints an Honour which they muſt diſclaim: but with us the number of thoſe Daies is not greater than what the Affairs of the World may well comply with; and as the number of the Apoſtles is not large, ſo their Sanctity ſure is unqueſtionable; and then on thoſe Daies we neither Beſeech by their Merits nor recommend our ſelves to their Interceſſion. You ſee then how unreaſonable the Objection of *Popery* is here too: But ſee to what abſurdity it go's on. Firſt, it is ſuppos'd *Popery* to keep a Day in the Memory of an Apoſtle; and then it is thought as *Popiſh*, to call him a Saint. A Great Perſon at *Geneva*, it ſeems, preſum'd it ſomewhat *Popiſh* to obſerve Sunday it ſelf; and conſider'd about changing the Day. Nay ſome are ſo perverſely Superſtitious on the other hand, as that That day, on which all the Chriſtian World Remembers our Saviour's *Bitter Paſſion*, has ſeem'd to them the fitter for a Feaſt; and the time Univerſally now ſet apart for the Joyful Memory of his Bleſſed Nativity, the more proper for a Faſt. This indeed is not like the *Papiſts*: No, it is like a *Jew* or a *Heathen*.

To conclude, by *Popery* nothing can be meant, but the corruptions and uſurpations of the Church of *Rome*. For the Faith of that Church was once as fair ſpoken of as it's Errors are now; and had ſhe continu'd in that purity, we ought to have

been of her Communion: and now we are to depart from her no otherwiſe, than ſhe ſhall be found to have departed from her ſelf, and to have corrupted that Doctrine which was once deliver'd unto the Saints. As we muſt not receive the Evil for the ſake of the Good, ſo we muſt not reject the Good for the ſake of the Evil. We have not one Doctrine or Ceremony that is *purely Popiſh:* but we muſt part with the beſt things in our Religion, if all thoſe things are ſinful, which the *Papiſts* abuſe. And as for the *Papiſts* themſelves, we do not in the leaſt countenance them in thoſe things wherein they are wrong, by agreeing with them in thoſe things wherein they are right.

CHAP. IX.

The Objection of Mixt-Communion Anſwer'd.

SOme think that the Church is to conſiſt of none but real Saints; and therefore finding many corrupt Members in the *Church* of *England*, they ſeparate from her Communion, and ſet up Churches of their own, Conſiſting, in their judgment, of none but tru'y ſanctify'd Perſons. The Ground of this dangerous miſtake is their falſe Notion of that holineſs, which the *Scripture* applies to God's Church.

Holineſs in *Scripture* is twofold. 1. *Inherent Holineſs*, and that can be in none properly but God, Angels and Men. In *God* Originally, as he is that Being, in whom all Excellencies do poſſeſs infinite Perfection; and hence he is call'd *the Holy*

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One of Iſrael. In *Angels* and *Men* by way of Participation. 2. *Relative Holineſs* founded in a Separation of any thing from common uſes, and an Appropriating it to the Service of God. Thus the Sabbath is *holy*, and *Judea* and *Jeruſalem* are *holy*; and thus the Church is *holy*, that is, a Society ſeparated from the World to ſerve God after a peculiar manner. Thus the *Iſraelites*, even when very much corrupted, were call'd God's *holy People*; *Deut.* 7. 6. and the *Apoſtles* call the Churches by the name of *Saints*, tho' there were ſtrange immoralities amongſt them, becauſe they were ſeparated to God and in Covenant with him.

Well; but did not Chriſt die, *that the Church ſhou'd be holy and without blemiſh*, *Eph.* 5. 27. that is, really holy? Yes. But then by *Church* we muſt underſtand not the whole Univerſal Church, but either that part of it which is really holy in this World, or that Church which ſhall be hereafter, when the corrupt Members ſhall be utterly cut off. Neither is this to make two Churches, but only to aſſign two different ſtates of the ſame Church.

This being premis'd, I ſhall prove theſe three Propoſitions; 1. *That an external profeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith is enough to qualify a perſon to be admitted a Member of Chriſt's Church.*

2. *That every ſuch Member has a right to all the external privileges of the Church, till by the juſt cenſure of the Church he be excluded from thoſe privileges.*

3. *That ſome corrupt Members remaining in the Church is no juſt cauſe of ſeparation from her.*

Firſt then, *an external Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith* (made either by himſelf or by his Sureties) *is enough to qualify a Perſon to be admitted a Member of Chriſt's Church.* For, 1. This is the qua-

lification preſcrib'd by our Lord, *Go, teach all Nations*, that is, make Diſciples of all Nations, *Baptizing them*, &c. *Matth.* 28. 19. Now the Paſtors of the Church cannot know the ſincerity of Mens hearts, but their Profeſſion of Chriſtianity entitles them to baptiſm. By this Rule the Apoſtles acted whilſt Chriſt was upon Earth, and Baptiz'd more than were ſincere; for of ſo many Perſons that were Baptiz'd, not above 120 continu'd with Chriſt to the laſt. 2. By the ſame Rule they acted afterwards; for St. *Peter* Baptiz'd about 3000 in one day upon their profeſſing the Word, *Acts* 2. 41. tho' all wou'd not probably prove ſincere; and two of them, *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, were groſs Hypocrites. St. *Philip*, Acts 8. 12. Baptiz'd *both Men and Women* at *Samaria*, and and amongſt them was *Simon Magus*; whom the holy Deacon might juſtly ſuſpect for his former practices, and whoſe Hypocriſie appear'd afterwards. Such other Members of the Church were *Demas*, *Hymeneus* and *Alexander*, whoſe bare Profeſſion Entitled them to that privilege. 3. Chriſt foretels (*a*) that his Church ſhou'd conſiſt of Good and Bad, by comparing it to a Field of Wheat and Tares, a Net of all ſorts of Fiſhes, a Flour of Corn and Chaff, &c. St. *Paul* ſaies, (*b*) *they are not all* Iſrael, *that are of* Iſrael; and *Chriſt* ſaies, that *many are call'd, but few choſen*. 4. The many corrupt members (*c*) of the Churches of *Corinth*, *Galatia*, and the ſeven Churches in *Aſia*, prove the ſame. For if the *Apoſtles* themſelves admitted mere formal Profeſſors, we may conclude, that they thought it God's Will, that it

(*a*) Matth. 3. 12. and 13. 24, &c. Joh. 15. 1. (*b*) Rom. 9. 6. (*c*) 1 Cor. 11. 20, 21. 2 Cor. 12. 20, 21. 1 Cor. 6. Gal. 3. Rev. 3.

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ſhou'd be ſo. 5. No other Rule in admitting Perſons into the Church is practicable; ſince the Officers of Chriſt cannot make a certain judgment of men, becauſe they themſelves have ſhort and fallible underſtandings.

Secondly therefore, *every ſuch member has a right to all the External privileges of the Church, till by the juſt cenſure of the Church he be excluded from thoſe privileges.* By External privileges I mean only a Communion with the Church in the Word and Ordinances; for the pardon of ſin and comforts of the Holy Ghoſt, &c. are Internal privileges, which belong to none but the truly Good, who *are born not of water only, but of the Spirit.* Now when a Man by groſs and notorious wickedneſs has forfeited the Internal privileges of the Church, he ought by the cenſures of the Church to be excluded from the External privileges alſo: but till the ſentence of the Church is paſt upon him, we muſt not forſake the Church ourſelves to avoid Communion with him; becauſe, till then, his right to them remains inviolable, and that for ſeveral reaſons.

1. Becauſe the Baptiſmal Covenant gives Men a right to God's Promiſes, as far as they perform the conditions. If a bare federal holineſs gives Men a relation to God, then it gives them a title to the bleſſings that belong to that relation. Not that unworthy Men ſhall receive the ſpecial reward of the truly Good; but they are to be allow'd the liberty to partake of thoſe External bleſſings, which he in common beſtows upon the whole family.

2. Church-Membership neceſſarily implies Church-Communion, or elſe it ſignifies nothing. For to what purpoſe is a Man a Member of

a Society, if he cannot enjoy the privileges of it?

3. All the *Jews* were commanded to join in the public Worſhip, tho' I doubt many of them were wicked Livers; and therefore mere Circumciſion was enough to put a Man into a capacity of Communicating with the *Jewiſh* Church in it's moſt Solemn and Sacred Ordinances.

4. It appears, that St. *Paul* makes the Number of thoſe that receiv'd the Lord's Supper to be as great, as that of thoſe that were Baptiz'd. For they were all *made to drink into one Spirit*, 1 Cor. 12. 13. that is, in the Cup of the bleſſed Sacrament, and *all are partakers of one Bread*, 10. 17. and we read that *they*, all the 3000, *Ananias* and *Sapphira* being of the number, *continu'd in the Apoſtles Doctrine, and in breaking of Bread and in Prayer*, *Acts* 2. 42.

5. Church-Memberſhip is in order to the Edification and Salvation of Mens Souls; and this cannot be attain'd without being admitted to all the Acts and Offices of Church-Communion. For it is of mighty advantage to us to hear God's Word duely Preach'd, to have our prayers join'd with thoſe of other Chriſtians, and our grace ſtrengthen'd in the Holy Communion; and theſe things cannot be had, but in Church-Communion. Nay, our improvement in holineſs is more to be aſcrib'd to the operations of the Spirit, than to the External Adminiſtrations; and therefore, (*d*) ſince God Promiſes his Spirit to Believers only as they are Members of of his Church, and no otherwiſe than by the uſe and Miniſtry of his Word and Sa-

(*d*) Acts 2. 47. Eph. 5. 23. and 4. 4.

craments;

craments; ſince his ordinary method of ſaving Men is by adding them to the Church; ſince Chriſt ſuffer'd for us as incorporated into a Church, and the operations of the Spirit are confin'd to the Church; we ſee the neceſſity of holding actual communion with the Church in order to ſanctification and ſalvation.

But it may be ſaid, that thoſe who have only the Form and not the power of Godlineſs, *are guilty of the Body and Blood of Chriſt, and eat and drink their own damnation*, when they receive the Sacrament, 1 Cor. 11. 27, 29. and ſuch men cannot have a right to that, in doing which they ſin ſo heinouſly. Now to this I anſwer, 1. that in a ſtrict ſenſe the very beſt men are unworthy receivers; but, 2. thoſe Members, that we have aſſerted to have a right to the External privileges of Chriſt's Church, are not guilty of that unworthineſs which the Apoſtle ſpeaks of. For we do not plead for the right of ſuch open and ſcandalous ſinners, whom St. *Paul* charges with Schiſm and Diviſions, pride and contempt of their Brethren, ſenſuality and drunkenneſs. Such ſwine as theſe ought not indeed to come to the Holy Table of our Lord, becauſe they have forfeited their right to it, and ought by the cenſures of the Church to be excluded.

If it be ſaid, that thoſe receivers, who are deſtitute of ſaving grace, tho' they are free from ſcandalous ſins, are yet in an unconverted condition; and that this Sacrament is not a converting, but confirming Ordinance; I anſwer, that taking converſion for turning Men to the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, 't is true that none but converted or Baptiz'd Perſons muſt receive the Sacrament: but if we take converſion for turning thoſe who are

already Baptiz'd, to a ſerious practice of holineſs, then this is a converting ordinance. For what more powerful motives to holineſs can be found, than what the Sacrament repreſents to us; wherein the great love of God in Chriſt, and our Saviour's ſufferings, and God's hatred of ſin, and the diſmal conſequences of it are ſo lively ſet forth?

Thirdly I proceed to ſhew, that *ſome corrupt Members remaining in the Church is no juſt cauſe of Separation from her.* And,

1. From the Example of the *Jews.* What ſins cou'd be greater than thoſe of *Eli*'s Sons, who arriv'd to ſuch impudence in ſinning, that *they lay with the Women before the door of the Tabernacle*? Yet did not *Elkanah* and *Hannah* refrain to come up to *Shilo*, and to join with them in public worſhip. Nay, they are ſaid to *tranſgreſs* who refus'd to come, tho' they refus'd out of abhorrence of the Wickedneſs of thoſe Men, 1 *Sam.* 2. 17, 24. In *Ahab*'s time, when almoſt all *Iſrael* were Idolaters, and *halted betwixt God and Baal*; yet then did the Prophet *Elijah* Summon all *Iſrael* to appear on Mount *Carmel*, and hold a Religious Communion with them in Preaching and Praying, and offering a miraculous Sacrifice. Neither did the Seven Thouſand that had kept themſelves upright, and not bow'd their Knee to *Baal*, abſent themſelves becauſe of the Idolatry of the reſt; but they all came and join'd in that public Worſhip perform'd by the Prophet, 1 *Kings* 18.39. and 19. 18. In the *Old Teſtament*, when both Prince and Prieſts and People were very much deprav'd and debauch'd in their Manners, we do not find that the Prophets at any time *exhorted the faithful and ſincere to ſeparate*; or that they themſelves

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ſet up any ſeparate Meetings, but continu'd in Communion with the Church, Preaching to them and exhorting them to Repentance.

2. From the Example of *Chriſtians*. Many Members of the Churches of *Corinth* and *Galatia*, and the 7 Churches in *Aſia*, were grown very ſcandalous; yet we do not read that good Men Separated from the Church, or that the Apoſtles commanded them ſo to do.

3. From our Saviour's own Example, who did not ſeparate from the *Jewiſh* Church, tho' the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, who rul'd in Eccleſiaſtical Matters at that time, had *perverted the Law, corrupted the Worſhip of God, were blind guides and hypocrites, devoured widows houſes, and had only a form of Godlineſs*, Matth. 15. 6, 7, 8. How careful was he, both by his Example and Precept, to forbid and diſcountenance a ſeparation upon that account? *They ſit in* Moſes's *Seat*, ſaies he; *all therefore whatſoever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do*, Matth. 23. 2, 3.

4. From the Apoſtle's expreſs command to hold Communion with the Church of *Corinth*, notwithſtanding the many and great immoralities that were amongſt the Members of it. (*e*) *There were Schiſms and Contentions amongſt them, ſtrife and envyings, fornication and inceſt, eating at the Idols Table, and coming not ſo ſoberly as became them to the Table of our Lord*; yet do's the Apoſtle not only not command them to ſeparate, but approve their meeting together, and exhort them to continue it. *But* (*f*) *let a Man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.* In

(*e*) 1 *Cor.* 1. 12, 13. and 3. 3. and 5. 1. and 11. 18. (*f*) 1 *Cor.* 11. 28.

theſe words the Apoſtle plainly ſolves the Caſe I am diſcourſing on, and ſhews what private Chriſtians, in whoſe power it is not judicially to correct Vice, are to do, when they ſee ſo many vicious Members intruding to the bleſſed Sacrament; *viz.* not to abſtain from it, but by preparation and examination of themſelves to take care that they be not of their number. If to ſeparate had been the way, the Apoſtle wou'd then have manag'd his Diſcourſe after this manner; There are many Schiſms and ſtriſes in the Church, there is an inceſtuous Perſon not caſt out, many proud contemners of their Brethren, Men of ſtrange Opinions, of untam'd Appetites, and unbridl'd Paſſions, and therefore I adviſe you not to come amongſt them, nor to partake of the Holy Sacrament with them, leſt you be infected with their Sores, and partake of their Judgments. But by adviſing Men to examine themſelves, and then to come, he plainly intimates, that 'twas their Duty to continue in the Communion of the Church notwithſtanding theſe; as if he had ſaid, I do not mention the foul Enormities of ſome that come to this holy Table, to diſcourage you from coming, leſt you ſhou'd be polluted by their ſins: but to excite you to a due care and examination of your ſelves, that you be not polluted by any ſinful Acts and Compliances of your own; and then there's no danger of being defil'd by theirs.

5. From the Nature of Church-Communion. I have already prov'd in the *Firſt* Chapter, that every act of Church-Communion is an act of Communion with the whole Chriſtian Church, and and all the Members of it, whether preſent or abſent: and therefore thoſe, who ſeparate from a National

National Church for the ſake of corrupt Profeſſours, are Schiſmatics in doing ſo; and all their Prayers and Sacraments are not acts of Communion, but a Schiſmatical Combination. Becauſe, tho' they cou'd form a Society as pure and holy as they deſire, yet they confine their Communion to their own ſelect company, and exclude the whole body of Chriſtians, all the World over, out of it. Their Communion is no larger, than their gather'd Church; for if it be, then they muſt ſtill Communicate with thoſe Churches, which have corrupt Members, as all viſible Churches on earth have.

'Tis true, good Men muſt frequently exhort and adviſe corrupt and ſcandalous Members; they muſt reprove them with prudence, affection and calmneſs; they muſt bewail their ſins and pray to God for their Reformation; they muſt as much, and as conveniently as may be, avoid their company, eſpecially all familiarity with them; and if repeated admonitions, either private or before one or two more, will not do; then they muſt tell the Church, that by it's more public reproofs the ſcandalous Members may be reclaim'd, or by it's juſt cenſures cut off from the Communion. Theſe things the *Holy Scriptures* command us to do, and the Primitive Chriſtians practis'd accordingly. But if after all the endeavours of private Chriſtians, ſome ſcandalous Members, thro' the defect of diſcipline, ſhou'd remain in the Church; they cannot injure thoſe Perſons that are no way acceſſary to their ſin. For no ſin pollutes a Man, but that which is choſen by him. *Noah* and *Lot* were good, even amongſt the wicked; nor did *Judas* defile our Saviour and his Apoſtles at the paſſover. The good and bad Communicate toge-

together (not in ſin, but) in their common duty. To Communicate in a ſin, is ſin: but to Communicate with a ſinner, in that which is not ſinful, cannot be a ſin.

'Tis true, the Apoſtle ſaies, 1 *Cor.* 5.6. *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*; but this is a Proverbial ſpeech, and ſhews only that ſin, like leaven, is of a very ſpreading nature. The People are as a lump, and a wicked Perſon is as leaven amongſt them: but, tho' the leaven is apt to convey it ſelf thro' the whole lump, yet only thoſe parts are actually leaven'd with it, that take the leaven; and ſo, tho' the ſinner by his bad example is apt to infect others, yet thoſe only are actually infected, who Communicate with him in ſin. *Beware of the leaven of the Phariſees*, ſaies our Saviour; he do's not adviſe his Diſciples to leave their Aſſemblies, but to beware that they take no leaven of them. The inceſtuous Perſon was not caſt out of the Church of *Corinth*; and yet the Apoſtle ſaies, at leaſt of ſome of them, *ye are unleavened*, 1 Cor. 5. 7. And why may not the joint Prayers of the Church, and the examples of good Men, be as ſovereign an antidote againſt the infection; as the bare company of wicked Men is of power to convey it? Eſpecially conſidering that the ſins of the wicked ſhall never be imputed to the righteous: but the Prayers of the righteous have obtain'd pardon for the wicked.

If it be ſaid, that the pollutions of ſin were typify'd by the legal uncleaneſſes, and that every thing that the unclean Perſon touch'd, was made unclean; I anſwer, that thoſe legal pollutions did not defile the whole Communion, but only thoſe whom the unclean Perſon touch'd. For, 1. There was no Sacrifice appointed for any ſuch pollution,

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as came upon all for the ſin of ſome few. 2. Tho' the Prophets reprov'd the Prieſts for not ſeparating *the clean from the unclean, Ezek.* 22. 26. yet they never taught, that the whole Communion was polluted, becauſe the unclean came into the Congregation thro' the neglect of the Prieſts duty. As thoſe that touch'd the unclean Perſon, were unclean: ſo thoſe that have Fellowſhip with the wicked in their ſins, are polluted. 3. When 'tis ſaid, that the unclean Perſon, that did not purify himſelf, *defil'd the Tabernacle and polluted the ſanctuary*; the meaning is, that he did ſo to himſelf, but not to others; ſo does a wicked Man the Ordinances of God, in reſpect of himſelf, but not of others. The Prayers of the wicked, tho' join'd with thoſe of the Church, are an abomination unto God; whilſt at the ſame time the Prayers of good Men go up as a ſweet-ſmelling Savour, and are accepted by him. The Perſon that comes unworthily to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, eats and drinks Judgment to himſelf: but that hinders not, but that thoſe who at the ſame time come better prepar'd, may do it to their own Eternal Comfort and Salvation. *To the pure all things are pure: but to them that are defil'd and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their Mind and Conſcience is defil'd*, *Tit.* 1. 15.

I grant indeed, that the Apoſtle ſaies, 2 *Cor.* 6. 17. *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing:* but this makes nothing againſt my Aſſertion, if we conſider, 1. the occaſion of this Exhortation. For the Chriſtian *Corinthians* liv'd in the midſt of Heathens, by whom they were often invited to their Idol-Feaſts, at which ſome of them did not ſcruple to eat things Sacrificed to Idols: but the Apoſtle

Apoſtle perſuades them not to go, not only upon the account of ſcandal to their weak Brethren, whoſe ignorance might ſuffer them to be drawn by their Example to go and eat at them, even in honour to the Idol; but alſo, becauſe 'twas plain Idolatry ſo to do. For as we receive the Lord's Supper in honour of *Chriſt*: ſo they muſt be thought to eat in honour to the Idol; becauſe the Sacrifice was offer'd to the Idol. But bleſſed be God, we live in a Chriſtian Country, wherein there are no Idol-Feaſts at all. 2. That the Perſons, from whom they were to ſeparate, were no better than *Unbelievers* and *Idolaters*. But now, becauſe Chriſtians by the Apoſtle's command were to ſeparate from the Aſſemblies of *Heathen* Idolaters, do's it therefore follow that they muſt ſeparate from the Aſſemblies of *Chriſtians*, becauſe ſome, who while they profeſs *Chriſt*, do not live like *Chriſtians*, are preſent at them? Is there no difference between a *Pagan* or an *Infidel*, that denies *Chriſt* and worſhips Devils; and an immoral *Chriſtian*, who outwardly owns *Chriſt* and worſhips the true God? 3. That the unclean thing they were not to touch, was the abominable practices us'd by the Heathens in the Worſhip of their Gods. But now, becauſe Chriſtians are not to Communicate with Heathens in their filthy Myſteries, nor to partake with any ſort of wicked Men in any Action that's Immoral; do's it therefore follow, that they muſt not do their Duty, becauſe ſometimes it cannot be done but in their Company? Muſt they abſtain from the public Worſhip of God and the Lord's Table, to which they are commanded; becauſe Evil Men, who, till they repent, have nothing to do there, rudely intrude themſelves?

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As for St. *John*'s words, *Revel.* 18. 4. *Come out of her, my People, that ye be not partakers of her ſins, and that ye receive not of her plagues*; they are a command to all Chriſtians to forſake the Communion of *Idolaters*; and according to moſt Interpreters, thoſe in particular of the *Church* of *Rome*: but the Text do's not afford the *Diſſenters* the leaſt Plea to ſeparate from us, who are Reform'd from *Popery*, and retain nothing of it, but what it retains of the Goſpel and the Primitive Church.

I have nothing now to add, but that the eminent *Diſſenters* do utterly (*g*) diſclaim this Plea of *Mixt-Communion*. Mr. *Vines* ſaies it is *Donaſtical*; and others, as Mr. *Brinſly*, and Mr. *Jenkin*, that *it's the common Plea or Pretence, which for the moſt part hath been taken up by all Schiſmatics, in defence of their Separation from the Church*; and therefore that it is neceſſary *the People ſhould be untaught it*, as Mr. *Baxter* adviſes. And as they do diſclaim it, ſo they declare that thoſe who ſeparate upon this account, *do it very unjuſtly*; that *the Scandals of Profeſſors are ground of mourning, but not of Separation*; that *there may be a ſufficient cauſe to caſt out obſtinate ſinners, and yet not ſufficient cauſe for one to leave the Church, tho' ſuch be not caſt out*; that *the ſuffering of profane and ſcandalous Livers to continue in the Church, and partake in the Sacrament, is doubtleſs a great ſin; yet the Godly are not preſently to ſeparate from it. There is*, ſaies Mr. *Burroughs*, *an errour on both ſides; either thoſe*

(*g*) See *Vines* on the Sacrament, p. 235, 242. Platform, c. 14. §. 8. *Brinſly*'s Arraignm. p. 37, 38. *Jenkin* on *Jude* v. 19. *Baily*'s Diſſwaſive, p. 22. Sacril. deſert. p. 97. *Cawdrey*'s Reformation promoted, p. 131. *Manton* on *Jude*, p. 496. *Coston*'s Holineſs of Church-Members, p. 2. *Burroughs*'s Goſpel-Worſhip. Serm. 11. p. 242.

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that think it concerns them not at all with whom they come to the Sacrament, or thoſe that if they do what they can to keep the Scandalous away, and yet they ſhou'd be ſuffer'd to come, think that they themſelves may not come to partake of it. This both the *Preſbyterians* and *Independents* agree in, and endeavour (*h*) to prove by ſeveral Arguments.

Nay, they anſwer an Objection drawn from, 1 *Cor.* 5. 11. *If any Man that is called a Brother, be a Fornicator,* &c. *with ſuch an one no not to eat*; and tell us, *Firſt*, That if it be meant of excluding ſuch an one from Church-Communion, it muſt be done by the Church, and not by a private Perſon. *But you are not commanded to ſeparate from the Church, if they exclude him not.* So Mr. *Baxter*, &c. *Secondly*, That it concerns not Religious, but Civil Communion; and that not all Civil Society or Commerce, but Familiar alſo. For which they produce ſeveral Reaſons; 1. They argue from the Notion of *eating Bread, which is a Token of Love and Friendſhip in the phraſe of Scripture; not to partake of, or to be ſhut from the Table, is a ſign of Familiarity broken off.* So Mr. *Ball*, &c. 2. *The eating which is here forbidden, is allow'd to be with the Heathen: but it's the civil eating which is only allow'd to*

(*h*) See *Vines* on the Sacrament. p. 31, 32, 44, 242, 246. Vindicat. of Presb. Gov. p. 134. *Brinſly's* Arraignm. p. 47. *Firmin's* Separ. Exam. p. 40. *Cawdrey's* Church-Reior. p. 71. *Tombes's* Theod. p. 74. *Hooker's* Survey, Pref. A 3. Platform, c. 14. §. 8, 9. Grave Confut. part. 3. p. 53. 55. *Burroughs's* Goſpel-worſh. Serm. 11. p. 236, 237. *Ball's* Tryal, c. 10. p. 191, 250, 211. *Jean's* Diſcourſe on the Lord's Supper. *Rutherford's* Right of Presbyt. *Blake's* Vindic. p. 235. *Cotton's* Inf. Bapt. p. 102. *Cartwright* on Proverb. *Edwards's* Apol. *Baxter's* Chriſtian Direct. p. 707. Non-conformiſts no Schiſmaticks, p. 16. *Bains* on the Epheſ. c. 1. v. 1. p. 5.

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be with an Heathen; therefore it's the civil eating which is forbidden to be with a Brother. So Mr. *Jenkin*, &c. (*i*) And as for other Objections, Mr. *Baxter*'s anſwer is ſufficient; *If you mark all the Texts in the Goſpel, you ſhall find that all the Separation which is commanded in ſuch caſes (beſides our Separation from the Infidel and Idolatrous World, or Antichriſtian and Heretical Confederacies, and No-Churches) is but one of theſe two ſorts*; 1. *Either that the Church caſt out the impenitent by the Power of the Keys*; *or*, 2. *That private Men avoid all private Familiarity with them*; *but that the private Members ſhou'd ſeparate from the Church, becauſe ſuch Perſons are not caſt out of it, ſhew me one Text to prove it if you can.*

To conclude, this objection of *Mixt-Communion* proves nothing but a ſupercilious Arrogance, and a great want of Charity in thoſe that make it. What care they may take in their new way of *Diſcipline*, I cannot tell: but our Church has given the Miniſter a power of rejecting ſcandalous Sinners, (*k*) and this is as much as can be done; for the cloſe Hypocrite will eſcape the narroweſt ſearch. Every Man is charg'd to *examine himſelf*, and not

(*i*) See *Baxter*'s Defence part 2. p. 27. *Ball*'s Tryal, p. 200. *Jenkin* on *Jude*, v. 19. *Cawdrey*'s Church-Reformat. p. 75, 122, 126. *Brinſly*'s Arraignment, p. 40, 45, 48. *Tombes*'s Theodul. p. 128, 167, 210. Grave Confut. part 1. p. 17, 18. & part 4. p. 57. *Vines* on the Sacrament. p. 219, 226, 333, 246. *Cartwright*'s Def. of the Admon. p. 98, 99, 106. *Goodwin* on the *Epheſ.* p. 487, 488. *Blake*'s Vindic. c. 31. p. 236, 238. *Gilliſp.* Nihil reſpondet, p. 33. *Knutton*'s Queries. *Throughton*'s Apol. p. 65. *Baxter*'s Cure, Dir. 47. p. 231. *Owen*'s Evangel. Love, c. 3. p. 77. *Brian*'s Dwelling with God. Sermon. 6. p. 301. *Firmin*'s Separat. Exam. p. 28. *Collins*'s Provocator Provocatus, p. 144. 151. *England*'s Remembrancer, Serm. 16. p. 454. (*k*) *See* Rubr. after the Communion.

another; and 'twou'd be well, if all wou'd do ſo. For he that enquires ſeriouſly into his own ſins, will find great cauſe to be humble and penitent: but he that is curious to pry into the miſcarriages of others, will be apt to be vain, proud, ſelf-conceited, and cenſorious; which will make him as unfit for the Table of the Lord, as any of thoſe Faults which he ſo ſcornfully condemns in his Neighbours, that he eſteems himſelf and the Ordinances of God polluted by their Company.

CHAP. X.

The Pretences of Purer Ordinances, and Better Edification among the Diſſenters, *Anſwer'd.*

WELL; but tho' our Communion be not ſinful, yet they can find Purer Ordinances and Better Edification amongſt the *Diſſenters*; and therefore they may lawfully ſeparate from the Church of *England*.

But *Firſt*, what Purer Ordinances wou'd Men have than thoſe of our Saviour's own Inſtitution, without any corrupt and ſinful mixtures to ſpoil their Vertue and Efficacy? The Purity of Divine Adminiſtrations muſt conſiſt in their agreement with the Inſtitution, that there is not any ſuch defect or addition as alters their nature and deſtroys their Vertue: but he who thinks that the Sacraments loſe their Efficacy, unleſs they be adminiſtred in that way which he likes beſt, is guilty of groſs Superſtition; and attributes the Vertue of Sacraments to the manner of their adminiſtration, not to their Divine Inſtitution.

Secondly,

Secondly, the pretence of better Edification will by no means juſtify ſeparation. For this Edification muſt be underſtood, either of the whole Church, or of particular Chriſtians. Now Edification is building up, and is apply'd to the whole Church, conſider'd as God's Houſe and Temple. This is the true Scripture Notion of it, as appears by many Texts, 1 *Cor.* 3. 9, 10. and 8. 1. and 14. 5, 12. *Eph.* 2. 21. and 4. 12, 13, 15, 16. *Matth.* 21. 42. *Acts* 4. 11. 2 *Cor.* 10. 8, 12, 19. and 13. 10. Now it's an odd way of building up the Temple of God by dividing and ſeparating the parts of it from each other. As for the Edification of particular Perſons, which is alſo ſpoken of in Scripture, 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 11. it is therefore call'd Edification, becauſe it is an improvement of a Man's Spiritual Condition; and it is wrought in the Unity of the Church, and makes particular Chriſtians one Spiritual Houſe and Temple, by a firm cloſe Union and Communion of all the parts of the Church; ſo that every Chriſtian is Edify'd, as he grows up in all Chriſtian Graces and Vertues in the Unity of the Church. And indeed, if our Growth in Grace be more owing to the aſſiſtance of God's Spirit, than to the external adminiſtrations, as St. *Paul* tells us, 1 *Cor.* 3. 6, 7. and if the Spirit confines his influences to the Unity of the Church, there being but *one Body and one Spirit*, *Eph.* 4. 4. then it do's not ſeem a very likely way for Edification, to cut our ſelves off from the Unity of *Chriſt*'s Body. St. *Jude*, v. 19. ſeems to tell us, that true Edification was a ſtranger to thoſe who ſeparated from the common building: but *thoſe who kept to the Communion of the Church, built up themſelves in their moſt Holy Faith, and Pray'd in the Holy Ghoſt*; and a Man may with greater aſſurance expect the Bleſſing of God, if he

continue in the Church, than if he ſeparate.

But I ſhall examine this pretence at large; and ſhew, that it is unlawful for any particular Chriſtian to ſeparate from the *Church* of *England*, becauſe he thinks he can Edify better amongſt the *Diſſenters*. This I ſhall prove by *Four* Arguments.

I. Becauſe better Edification cannot be had in ſeparate Meetings, than in our Churches; as will appear, if we conſider, *Firſt*, how fit our conſtitution is to Edify Mens Souls; *Secondly*, that this conſtitution is well manag'd for Edification.

Firſt then, That our conſtitution is fit to Edify Souls, will appear, if we conſider *Four* things. 1. Our Creeds contain all Fundamental Articles of Faith, that are neceſſary to Salvation; but we have no nice and obſcure matters in them. We believe all that the early Chriſtians in the firſt *Three Hundred* years thought needful; that is, all that *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles taught: and this Faith will ſufficiently and effectually Edify the Souls of Men. 2. The neceſſity the Church laies upon a good Life and Works. The Articles of her Creed, when firmly believ'd, do plainly tend to make Men good. She declares, that without preparatory Vertues the moſt zealous devotion is not pleaſing to God; and that it is but ſhow, unleſs obedience follow. Such a Faith ſhe laies down as Fundamental to Salvation, as produces excellent Vertues; and determines, that *without Faith and Good Works no Man ſhall ſee God.* Her Feſtivals commemorate the Vertues and recommend the Examples of Excellent Men. Her Ceremonies are decent; her Prayers are for Holineſs; her Diſcipline is to force, and her Homilies to perſuade Men to that Piety, which her whole conſtitution aims at. She tells Sinners plainly, that unleſs they repent, they

they muſt periſh; and ſaies that plain Vertues are the Ornament and Soul of our Faith. And certainly the Civil Intereſt of a Nation is Edify'd by ſuch a Church, as teaches Men to perform the duties of their ſeveral relations ſo exactly. 3. She is fitly conſtituted to excite true Devotion; becauſe ſhe gives us true Notions of God and our ſelves, by deſcribing his attributes and our wants. Her Prayers are grave and of a due length; and ſhe has proper Prayers for moſt particular occaſions. She has Offices to quicken our affections and confirm our obedience. The Offices of the Lord's Supper, Baptiſm and Burial, are extremely good in their kind. Bring but an honeſt mind and good affections to all theſe parts of Devotion, and they will make the Church a Choire of Angels. 4. Her Order and Diſcipline are ſuch, that ſhe makes Religion neither ſlovenly, nor too gay. Wiſe and good Men have judg'd all her Ceremonies to be decent and uſeful; and they are of great Antiquity, and fit to make our Services comely. And truly, whilſt we have Bodies, theſe outward helps are very convenient, if not neceſſary. Her Goverment is ſo well temper'd, that her Members may not be diſſolute, nor her Rulers inſolent. And if all Vices are not chaſtiz'd, the reaſon is, becauſe unneceſſary diviſions have ſtopp'd her Diſcipline upon offenders. Her Goverment is Apoſtolical, Primitive and Univerſal. None of her parts or Offices give juſt cauſe for any to revolt from her; but conſidering all things, ſhe is the beſt conſtituted Church in the World. If therefore (*a*) Edification be *going on to perfection*, or

(*a*) Heb. 6. 1. 2 Pet. 3. 18. Rom. 15. 2. 1 Cor. 14. 3.

growing in grace; if it is doing good to the Souls of Men; if it be to make plain the great things in Religion to the underſtandings of Men; then it is to be found in this Church.

Secondly, that our Conſtitution is well manag'd for Edification, will appear if we conſider, 1. That Paſtors are not left to their Liberty, but ſtrictly commanded under great temporal Penalties to direct their Flocks, to preſerve Faith and a good Conſcience with ſubſtantial Devotion, which will to the purpoſe Edify Mens Souls, and effectually ſave them. 2. That theſe commands are obey'd by our Paſtors. For this we appeal to good and wiſe Men in our Communion, who have honeſty and judgment enough to confeſs that they have found it true; and to ſay that they are prejudiced, and want ſincerity and knowledge to paſs a judgment, is uncharitable. Our *Proteſtant* Neighbours have commended our Goverment, condemn'd the Separation, Magnify'd our Paſtors, and wiſh'd they were under ſuch a Diſcipline, and Tranſlated many of our Mens Works to Edify their People. *Diſſenters* themſelves own our Sermons to be really good. And tho' ſome few may not be able to anſwer the true deſign of Preaching, yet in general Men may Edify very well among us. Nor has there been for theſe many hundred years a Clergy ſo Learned, Pious, Prudent and Induſtrious to Edify Mens Souls, as now is in the *Engliſh* Church.

II. Becauſe thoſe who make this pretence, do commonly miſtake better Edification. And ſurely to deſert the plain and great duty of Church-Communion for diſputable or miſtaken Edification, is to be guilty of the ſin of Schiſm. Now the miſtakes of theſe Men are principally three.

1. In

1. In taking nice notions for Edifying truths. He that diſcourſes about Angels, ſeparated Souls, the ſituation of Paradiſe and Hell, &c. ſhall be thought a ſounder Divine, than he that teaches the way of Salvation plainly, by Faith and a good Converſation. Such things paſs with too many for ſaving truths; and many ignorant and corrupt Men, that eſpouſe Parties and Intereſts, readily embrace them. The Apoſtle ſpeakes of ſome that have *itching ears*, 2 Tim. 4. 3. If the food, tho' wholſom and good, be not to their fancy, they complain of ſtarving. Bring but an honeſt, ſincere and teachable mind, and you may Edify in a worſe Church than ours; but otherwiſe the beſt Doctrine will be inſipid to you. Place Edification in the ſubſtantial things of Religion, in a right Faith and a holy Converſation, which our Church preſſes upon us under the penalty of eternal damnation; for theſe things alone do truly Edify the ſouls of Men, and to theſe all Religion tends. The Kingdom of Chriſt conſiſts *in righteouſneſs and peace and joy in the Holy-Ghoſt*, Rom. 14. 17. Now ſuch a Religion as this being ſo ſtrongly enjoin'd and zealouſly taught in our Church, we need not complain for want of Edification; and the deſire of other nouriſhment is *ſpiritual pride* and *wantonneſs*. *Wherefore deſire the ſincere milk of the Word* (the food of your underſtanding, and not of your fancy) *that you may grow thereby*. For if you had but ſuch an *increaſe of grace*, as *to hear meekly God's Word and to receive it with pure affection*, you cou'd not eaſily fail *to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit*. Therefore 'tis dangerous and ſinful to give Men a Liberty to run from any eſtabliſh'd Church for better Edificaton, which is ſo often and eaſily

miſtaken. And may we not add, that when a quarrel ariſes from an unjuſt denial of the Miniſter's Dues, then he is call'd dull, and a better muſt be ſought elſewhere. Thus one fault helps out another, and defamation muſt excuſe the Schiſm.

2. In taking the Opinions of parties for eſſential truths. This thoſe Men do, that are wedded to a Party; and if we do not explain all things in their way, they cry, we deſtroy the Goſpel truths, and that inſtead of being Edify'd they are weaken'd in their faith. The early and beſt Chriſtians thought it ſufficient to know *Jeſus and the Reſurrection* in their full extent; and it were well if Men were ſatisfy'd with this old way; otherwiſe they break the Peace of the Church and Obedience to Governours, which are the great things of Religion, upon the ſcore of better Edification.

3. In taking ſudden heats and warmth, ariſing from melting tones and other arts, for Edification; whereas a bright or a lowring day, or a Doſe of Phyſic can do the ſame things; and they have often happen'd in the worſt of Men. According as theſe Heats and Bodily Paſſions are Stirr'd, ſo in ſome Mens Opinion the Miniſtry is Edifying or Unprofitable. But ſound and ſolid Reaſoning is the true way to Edification; whereas the Silly and Weak, who are moſt ſubject to theſe Heats and Colds, are Inconſtant, and turn round in all Religions. Such Perſons being all ſail, are the more eaſily toſt about with every wind of Doctrine.

III. Becauſe the pretence of better Edification will cauſe endleſs diviſions in the Church. For ſince every Man muſt judge, and the Governour

vernour must not restrain him, therefore People may run from Teacher to Teacher to find out Better Edification, *Ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth*, 2 Tim. 3. 7. And when once they have torn the Unity of the Church in pieces, then envy, detraction, strife, murmurings, fierceness, and numberless other mischiefs will come in; and that which divided them from the Church, will crumble them into Endless Parties, to the joy of our Enemies. But all this wou'd be avoided, if Men were sensible of the heinous nature of Schism, which the Apostles and all the ancient Christians have painted forth in the blackest colours.

IV. Because this is a discouragement to an honest and truly Christian Ministry. For if the Flock run from a Pastor, that instructs them rightly, upon pretence of better Edification; will it not cool his zeal, check his labours, and affront his Person and Office? And this may be done to the best Pastors, as well as to others; and the most judicious *Dissenters* have complain'd of it: tho' upon this principle it cannot be remedy'd, because the people must judge for themselves. And ought the Ministers to be scorn'd and discountenanc'd and have their Ministry rendred useless, for the fancies, peevishness and humour of the People? If it be said, that the Pastor is idle or unsound in Doctrine; I answer, that our Governours, upon a just and modest complaint will quicken the lazy and negligent, and correct the Heretical Pastor, and restore the Flock to true Edification.

I may add, that the eminent *Dissenters* do declare, that the pretence of *Better Edification* is not a sufficient excuse for Separation, as those who have leisure may find in these Books of

theirs which I have quoted (*b*) at the bottom.

But after all that has been ſaid, I know ſome Perſons will object, that our Miniſters are unedifying Preachers, for they cannot profit by their Sermons. Therefore I ſhall endeavour to give theſe Men full ſatisfaction; and I doubt not to demonſtrate, that they may profit by our Sermons, if it be not their own fault.

We are all agreed, that the *Scriptures* contain all things neceſſary to Salvation; and therefore when they are rightly open'd and duly apply'd in a Sermon, ſo that the hearers improve in Chriſtian Knowledge, or in Faith, or in well-doing, then they profit by that Sermon. Now if any Man do not improve in theſe by the help of our Sermons, the fault muſt be, either in the Matter of the Sermon, or in the manner of it.

And as for the former of theſe, I can ſcarce think, that any *Diſſenter* will except againſt our Sermons upon that account; they being taken out of the *Scriptures*, which were never better open'd and apply'd, than in our Sermons. I am ſure, all heavenly truths are faithfully declar'd in them. Matters of Controverſy are rarely handled in our Pulpits; for the driſt of our Preachers is to make

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(*b*) See *Hilderſh.* Lect. 28, 29, 54, 58, 66. Methermeneut. p. 71, 72, 74. *Baxter's* Cure, p. 359. *his* Defence, part 1. p. 85. *his* Farewell-Sermon. Continuat. of Morn. Exer. Serm. 4. *Jenkin* on *Jude*, v. 19. *England's* Remembrancer, Serm. 16. *Burroughs's* Irenic. c. 12, 23. Platform, Pref. p. 7. & c. 13. *Ball's* Tryal, c. 4. *Brinſly's* Arraignment, p. 48. *Cawdry's* Independ. a Schiſm, p. 50. *Vines* on the Sacrament, p. 246. *Tuckney's* Serm. on *Acts* 9. 31. Jus Div. Min. Evangel. p. 11, 12. Letter of the Miniſt. in *Old-Eng.* to the Brethren in *New-Eng.* p. 13. *Nye's* Caſe of great uſe, p. 3, 25. *Tombes's* Theodul. c. 9. §. 8.

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the People good. They reſolve Caſes of Conſcience, and preſs the motives to believe, and the arguments to convince Men of their duty. They condemn all Vices, recommend all Vertues, and apply the Promiſes and Threatnings of the Goſpel. And if Men cannot profit where ſuch things are conſtantly well managed; I am ſure the fault do's not lie in the Matter of the Sermons, but ſomewhere elſe.

If ſome ſay, that the Matter is good, but the manner is ſuch, that they cannot reap the like benefit by them, as by the *Non-Conformiſts* Preaching; I anſwer, that the fault muſt then lie, either in the *Compoſition* or the *Delivery*. *Firſt*, as to the *Compoſition*, I am confident, that never did Men more endeavour after clear method and plain Language, than our Preachers now do. If it be objected, that they do not keep the old method of *Doctrine*, *Reaſon* and *Uſe*; I anſwer, that they alwaies chuſe it, when it is natural: but the ancient Doctors never obſerv'd any conſtant Rule; and yet the People profited much more, than they do now. *Secondly*, as to the *Delivery*, if it be objected that our Preachers are not *vehement* enough; I anſwer, that they are, when the Matter requires it; but *vehemence* loſes it's effect, if it be ſpent upon all things alike. *Vehemence* do's not conſiſt in the ſtrength of voice, nor yet in that heat of temper, which makes ſome Men ſpeak earneſtly, when they are not ſo deeply affected, as ſome of cooler tempers are. Sedate Men may inſtruct and move by the help of ſerious conſideration; and thoſe affections that are rais'd without it, are little worth. But neither all your Men, nor all ours, have the ſame voice or the ſame temper; and therefore this can be no more hindrance

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to Edification among us, than among you. If *reading of Sermons* be objected, I anſwer, that ſome of our Preachers uſe no notes in the Pulpit, others read but little; and if a Man will but turn his head another way, and not look upon the Preacher, a Sermon that is read altogether, will ſound as well, as if it were pronounced without book. If *reading* make a thing unprofitable; the *Bible*, when 'tis read, muſt be unprofitable, and it muſt be got without book to make it Edifying. Beſides, ſome famous Preachers of your own read every word; and therefore you may profit by ours as well as by them.

But I fear, that when Men complain they cannot profit by our Sermons, they mean nothing, but that our Preachers do not move their affections, as the *Non-Conformiſts* do. To this I cou'd ſay much, but it will be ſufficient to mention only three things. 1. Your Men and ours have ſeveral Talents, ſome for informing the judgment, others for moving the affections, and others for both. All your Men do not move you alike; and yet you make ſuch account of all, that you think it a very diſorderly thing for People to run from their own to another Miniſter (tho' of the ſame way) merely to have the affections more mov'd. Becauſe, 2. It is far from profiting by Sermons, to be tickl'd for a while and never to grow the better for them. 3. The chief thing is this, that affections rais'd merely by the earneſtneſs of the Preacher, are nothing comparable to thoſe, which we raiſe by conſideration and reflection upon what we have heard. And theſe affections our Sermons will certainly raiſe, if you will take a little pains with your ſelves, and lay them cloſe to your Conſciences.

Now

Now ſince our Sermons cannot be blam'd; I pray, conſider where the fault muſt lie, if you cannot profit by them. I beſeech you, in the fear of God, by whoſe Word we muſt one day be all judg'd, to conſider impartially, and ask your Conſciences ſuch *Queſtions* as theſe. 1. Had you not ſome prejudice againſt the Miniſter you came to hear, either for his *Conformity*, or his ſtrictneſs in it, and the like? If you had; ſuch prejudices bar the heart ſo ſtrongly againſt the moſt excellent inſtructions, that a Man will not profit by them. 2. Did you not come to Church but once or twice, and then conclude too haſtily, that there was no good to be gotten there? and were you not willing to have this excuſe for abſenting your ſelf wholly from it? Had you attended much, perhaps you had never left it. Try again for ſome time; and when you are acquainted with your Miniſter's method and ſtile and way of reaſoning, his Sermons may be clear, eaſy and awakening to you. The *Scriptures* themſelves are obſcure to the beſt of us, till we are acquainted with them; and if they had been treated, as our Sermons are, (I mean, rejected becauſe they are not preſently underſtood) they had been thrown away long ſince as unprofitable. 3. Did you not leave the Church, becauſe, when you came, the Miniſter happen'd to Treat of a Subject croſs to your opinion? Haſty perſons fling away from thoſe that contradict them; but had you had patience, you might have been profited and convinced by ſuch Diſcourſes. 4. Was not the Miniſter, when you chanc'd to go to Church, treating of ſome diſtaſtful Subject, which you love not to hear of? Was it not *Schiſm*, or *Diſobedience to* Governours? It is certain *there are* ſuch

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ſins, which are very dangerous, and he ought to Treat of them ſome time or other; and if he Preach of *Unity* and *Obedience*, may not you profit by it?

I doubt you have heard ſome of your own Miniſters ſpeak harder words of *Conformity* and *Conformiſts*, than you wou'd have had them, and you fancy you can profit even by thoſe Sermons; why then ſhou'd you leave our Miniſters, becauſe they preſs ſome duties more ſtrictly than you like? Do not many of your own way complain of their *unprofitableneſs* under your own Miniſters, which ariſes perhaps from a natural dulneſs? and will not prejudice, paſſion, and diſaffection to the way of worſhip, or to any Chriſtian Doctrine, hinder *profiting* much more than natural indiſpoſition? So that if you complain of deadneſs and unprofitableneſs under our Miniſtry, it is no more than many do under your own. You ſhou'd not raſhly conclude our Miniſtry to be Unedifying, but rather ſuſpect your ſelves to be guilty.

Thoſe alſo who fancy, that tho' they can profit ſomething by our Miniſtry, yet they can profit more by others, ought to conſider the ſame things, and ask their own conſciences the ſame queſtions. Do's not this conceit ariſe from the forementiond cauſes? Are you not more earneſtly preſs'd in our Congregations to be throughly good, than in thoſe where you think you profit more? This I muſt ſay, that if you do not grow more holy in all reſpects, you do but deceive your ſelves with an opinion of profiting more by the Non-Conforming Miniſtry than by ours. If you wou'd attend at our Churches, you need not go any whither elſe for true Edification. There is

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no end of ſeeking better entertainment of the fancy; and the old Non-Conformiſts thought this a dangerous principle, that *Men muſt go where they can profit moſt.* And becauſe the opinion of a famous Man of your own may prevail with you more than ours, I'le tell you what Mr. *Hilderſham* ſaies of *Mens leaving their own Paſtors to hear others*, Lect. 58. upon *John* 4.

Firſt he ſaies, *It is the ordinance of God that every Paſtor ſhou'd have his own Flock to attend,* and *every one of God's People ſhou'd have a Paſtor of his own to depend upon.* Now *they who dwell next together, ſhou'd be of the ſame Congregation.* And *if thy own Paſtor be a Man whoſe gift is approv'd by God's Church, and one who is conſcionable in his place, and of unblamable life; tho' his gifts be far inferiour to ſome others, yet take heed thou leave him not at any time with contempt of his Miniſtry, ſaying, I cannot profit by him.* For *a Man may be a true Miniſter, tho' his gifts be far inferiour to many others.* And *you are bound to Love him and Reverence him, and thank God for him.* And *doubtleſs thou mayeſt profit by him, if the fault be not in thy ſelf.* Nay, *there is never a Miniſter, that is of the moſt excellent gifts (if he have a godly heart,) but he can truly ſay, he never heard any faithful Miniſter in his life, that was ſo mean, but he cou'd diſcern ſome gift in him, that was wanting in himſelf, and cou'd profit by him. The fruit and profit that is to be receiv'd from the Miniſtry, depends not only, nor chiefly, upon the gifts of the Man that Preacheth, but upon the bleſſing that God is pleas'd to give unto his own ordinance. And God doth oft give a greater bleſſing to weaker, than to ſtronger means.* And *conſider, the fault may be rather in thy ſelf than in thy Teacher, that thou canſt not*

not profit. And indeed how is it poſſible thou ſhoud'ſt profit by his Miniſtry, if thou come with prejudice, without any Reverence, and delight unto it? Some follow another paſtor becauſe of his human gifts, ſome only for varieties ſake; ſome becauſe they ſhew more Zeal in their voice and geſture, and phraſe of ſpeech, and manner of delivery; tho' (haply) the Doctrine it ſelf be nothing ſo wholſom, as the Doctrine of their own Paſtor is. But *he only makes right uſe of the benefit of hearing ſuch as have more excellent gifts than his own Paſtor, as learns thereby to like his own Paſtor the better, and to profit more by him; As they uſe Phyſic well, whoſe appetite is amended, and who are by it made able to reliſh and like their ordinary food the better.* Theſe are his words who was of ſuch note heretofore among Non-Conformiſts; and *how come you to differ ſo much from the beſt of your own way in former daies?* The ſame Authour ſpeaking of the partial eſtimation of Miniſters, ſaies, *this factious diſpoſition in the hearers of God's Word hath in all Ages been the cauſe of much confuſion in the Church of God, and greatly hindred the fruit of the Goſpel of Chriſt, and made them uncapable of profit by the word.* Lect. 66.

O that you wou'd ponder ſuch profitable inſtructions! which were ſaid on purpoſe to check that, which is ſince grown the prevailing humour. Yes, will ſome ſay, we might be perſuaded to hear your Preachers conſtantly, but you can never juſtify the compelling us to it. But, ſaies Mr. *Hilderſham*, Lect. 52. *it is certain, that where there is a good Miniſtry eſtabliſh'd, the Magiſtrate may and ought to compell all his Subjects to come and hear; notwithſtanding all pretence of their Conſcience to the contrary.*

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In ſhort, a Sermon is then profitable, when it ſtrengthens faith and promotes holineſs; but the beſt Sermon in the world, tho' indited by the Spirit of God, will not profit, unleſs Men will attend without prejudice, paſſion, partiality, conceit and ſpiritual pride; and unleſs they will impartially conſider thoſe things, which are contrary to their preſent ſence; for want of which, multitudes did not profit by our Saviour's Sermons, but were rather more exaſperated by them. Conſider, I beſeech you, whether this be not your caſe; and ſubmit unto what ſhall appear to be reaſon, after you have weigh'd the matter impartially. This I hope will bring you to Church; where if you do not preſently find ſuch profit, as is promis'd, you may conclude in Mr. *Hilderſham*'s words; *Firſt, either you have not ſought it aright, not with earneſtneſs, or not with a good heart: Or Secondly, if you have, and do not find it at firſt; yet you ſhall hereafter, if you ſeek it here with an honeſt heart.*

You wou'd profit more by Sermons, if you wou'd obſerve ſome Rules deliver'd by the ſame Authour, *Lect.* 26. which now, alas! are generally neglected. One is, that *at your coming into the Congregation, and during the whole time of your abode there, you won'd behave your ſelves reverently.* For an awful ſence of God's preſence wou'd be an excellent preparation to receive benefit by his Service. Another Rule is, That *we muſt all come to the beginning of God's public Worſhip, and tarry till all be done.* Yea, *it is the duty of God's People,* ſaith he, *to be in God's Houſe before the beginning; for it becomes them to wait for the Miniſter of God, and not to let him wait for them.* For he ſhews, that Men may profit by all parts of the Service;

for (ſaies he) *as he that is away from any part of the Sermon, ſhall profit the leſs by that which he doth hear: ſo he that is away from any part of the Divine Service, gets the leſs good by that at which he is preſent.* Nay, he ſaies, Lect. 28. *tho' we cou'd receive no profit by the exerciſes us'd in our Aſſemblies, yet we muſt be preſent at them all, to do our homage unto God; and ſhew the Reverent Reſpect we have to his Ordinances.* A *Third* Rule is, that *we ought to join with the Congregation in all the parts of God's Worſhip. For it is comely, that all things in God's Service ſhou'd be done in good order, as if the whole Congregation were but one Man.* And in ſeveral places he reproves with a great deal of zeal, Men's great careleſneſs in this. A *Fourth* Rule is, *that we ought to teach our Children and Servants to ſhew Reverence to the Sanctuary and public Worſhip of God.* For God hates profaneſs even in Children; and contempt done by any may bring God's Curſe upon all. *And certainly*, ſaies he, *among other cauſes of the Plague, and other Judgments of God upon the Land, this is not the leaſt, that God's public Worſhip is perform'd among us with ſo little Reverence and Devotion as it is.*

But I will tranſcribe no more; only I ſhall earneſtly deſire two things. *Firſt*, that you wou'd conſider ſeriouſly, how you wou'd have lik'd what I have tranſcrib'd from Mr. *Hilderſham*, if one of our Men had Preach'd it; eſpecially if he added, that *for the Reverence of God's public Worſhip, care ſhou'd be taken, that the place where the Congregation Aſſembleth, may be decent and comely*; and that 'tis a foul ſin and contempt of God's houſe, to be careleſs about the Neatneſs of it. If you wou'd have thought it unprofitable; then conſider, why ſuch things as pleaſe out of one Man's mouth, ſhou'd

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diſpleaſe out of another's. Is it not manifeſt, that partiality makes you not profit by our Sermons? Or if you cou'd not like ſuch Diſcourſes, either from Non-Conformiſts, or our Miniſters; then are you not miſtaken about *profiting by Sermons*, when you think thoſe diſcourſes unprofitable, which ſober Men of all ſides have thought neceſſary? For Mr. *Hilderſham* ſaies, *Prophaneſs and Atheiſm hath made us too void of all care in beautifying the houſe of God.*

Secondly, If you think ſuch a Sermon *profitable*, conſider whether you have learnt ſo much out of *Scripture*, as to ſtudy and obſerve thoſe Rules. Do you, for inſtance, pay Reverence to God's houſe, and come at the beginning of *Service*, and ſtand up and kneel with the Congregation, &c? If you do not, then the fault is not in our Sermons, that you do not *profit*; for you do not profit by the *Scriptures* themſelves, which plainly teach theſe things.

To conclude, if we have all things neceſſary to the building us up in our moſt Holy Faith, in the Communion of the Church; it will be but a poor excuſe for our Dividing from it, that we hoped to be better *Edify'd:* when we had no encouragement at all to hope it, as long as we continu'd in the ſtate of *Separation* upon this Pretence. For it is the Bleſſing of God alone, and not any Man's Skill in diſpenſing them, that can make the word and ordinances any way beneficial to us. With the help of his grace, thoſe means of Inſtruction which we undervalue moſt, may be profitable to our Salvation. Without it our Ears may be tickled, and our Fancies pleaſantly entertain'd for the time; but we cannot be truly *Edify'd* by the moſt fluent and popular Tongue, or the moſt melting and pathetical Expreſſions in the World.

CHAP. XI.

The pretence of it's being againſt one's Conſcience to join with the Church of England, *Anſwer'd.*

HAving Anſwer'd the moſt conſiderable Objections againſt our Communion, I am now to deal with ſuch Perſons as ſeparate from us, tho' they have nothing to object againſt us; ſuch as pretend that they are not ſatisfy'd in our way, that 'tis againſt their Conſcience to join with us, or that they doubt of the lawfulneſs of our Communion, or at leaſt they ſcruple it. But I ſhall ſhew, that theſe excuſes are utterly inſignificant; and that they cannot eſcape the wrath of God, who commit a ſin, and think to cover it by pretending Conſcience for it.

But before I enter upon theſe Matters, I ſhall lay down the Principles I mean to proceed upon, by treating diſtinctly on theſe *Five* Heads. 1. Of the *Nature of Conſcience.* 2. Of the *Rule of Conſcience.* 3. Of the *Power of Human Laws to oblige the Conſcience.* And particularly, 4. *In the inſtances of Church-Communion.* 5. Of the *Authority of Conſcience*; or *how far a Man is obliged to be guided by it in his actions.*

1. Then, to find out the *Nature of Conſcience*, let us conſider what every Man doth really mean by that word, when he has occaſion to uſe it. Now as to this, I obſerve, *Firſt*, that a Man never ſpeaks of his *Conſcience*, but with reſpect to his own *actions.* We do not, for inſtance, make it a point of Conſcience, whether a thing be true or

or falſe, or whether an accident be proſperous or unfortunate, or whether another Man has done well or ill. Theſe things indeed may pleaſe or trouble us; but our *Conſcience* is affected only with that, which is willingly done or left undone by us, or which we may do, or may forbear. *Secondly*, We never uſe the Word *Conſcience* about our *actions*, but only ſo far as thoſe actions are to be directed by ſome *Law* or *Rule*; with which if they agree, they are *good*, and if they diſagree, they are *evil*. *Thirdly*, Our actions, as we concern our *Conſcience* in them, are either *already done*, or *not already done*. But whether they are *done* or *not done*, whether *paſt* or *future*, they are either *commanded by God*, and ſo they are *Duties*; or *forbidden by God*, and ſo they are *Sins*; or *neither commanded nor forbidden*, and ſo they are *indifferent actions*. Our actions, I ſay, do not touch our *Conſcience*, but as they fall under theſe conſiderations; and in all theſe reſpects we mean the ſame thing by *Conſcience*. For,

Firſt, If the action be *not already done*, we think it either *commanded by God*, and ſay, we are *bound in Conſcience*, or *think it our duty* to do it; or *forbidden by God*, and ſay, it is *againſt our Conſcience*, or we *think it a ſin* to do it; or elſe we think it is *indifferent*, and ſay, we may do it with a *ſafe Conſcience*, that is, we believe the action may be done *without tranſgreſſing any Law of God*. This is undeniably every Man's meaning, when he talks of Conſcience as to actions, that are not yet done. *Secondly*, If we ſpeak of our actions, that are *done* and *paſt*, ſaying, *my Conſcience bears me witneſs*, or *I am ſatisfy'd* or *troubled in Conſcience* for doing, what I have done; we mean nothing more than this, that reflecting upon

our own actions, we find, that we have either *done, as we are convinc'd we ought to do*, and this is a ſatisfaction to us; or *not done, as we ought to do*, and the remembrance of this troubles us. But in all theſe Caſes we mean the ſame thing by Conſcience, to wit, *our Judgment and Perſuaſion concerning what we ought to do, or ought not to do.* Only in the firſt ſort, Conſcience is conſider'd as the guide of actions to be done; and in the ſecond ſort, as the witneſs of thoſe that are already done: but in both ſorts *Conſcience* is the ſame thing, to wit, the Judgment of a Man's mind concerning the Morality of his Actions.

This is the true Notion of *Conſcience* in general; but if we put Epithets to it, and talk of a good or evil Conſcience, a tender Conſcience, or the like, then it includes more than I am now concern'd to give an account of.

II. I proceed to the *Rule of Conſcience*. It appears by what I have ſaid, that Conſcience muſt alwaies have a *Rule* to follow. For, ſince Conſcience is a Man's judgment about actions *as good*, or *bad*, or *indifferent*; it is certain, a Man muſt have ſome meaſure, by applying which, he may judge of what ſort the action is. This Meaſure is the *Rule of Conſcience*, and Conſcience is no farther ſafe, than as it follows that *Rule*. Now this Meaſure or *Rule of Conſcience* can be nothing elſe but the *Law of God*; becauſe nothing can be a *Duty*, or *Sin*, but what is commanded or forbidden by God's Law; and that thing only is *indifferent*, which his Law neither commands nor forbids.

Now by the Law of God, which is the *Rule of Conſcience*, I mean *God's Will* for the Goverment of Men's actions; whether declar'd by *Nature*, or *Revelation*. By the Law of Nature I mean thoſe Principles

Principles of Good and Evil, juſt and unjuſt, which God has written in our minds, and which every Man is *naturally* convinced of. Some things are eternally Good, as *to Worſhip God*, &c. and we know them to be our Duty; others are eternally Evil, and we know them to be Sins, by the light of Reaſon; and the Apoſtle ſaies, the *Gentiles* had this Law *written in their hearts*. But Chriſtians have the Law of Revelation too contain'd in the *Scriptures*; by which God do's not make void the Law of Nature, but declare it's Precepts more certainly and accurately, with greater ſtrength, and greater rewards and puniſhments, than before. By this alſo he has perfected the Law of Nature, and obliged us to higher inſtances of Vertue, and added ſome poſitive Laws; as for inſtance, to believe in Chriſt, to pray to God in Chriſt's Name, to be Baptiz'd and partake of the Lord's Supper.

Thus then the Natural and Reveal'd Law of God is the great *Rule of Conſcience*. Only we muſt remember, that by the Law of Nature is to be underſtood, not only the chief and general heads of it, but alſo the neceſſary deductions from theſe heads; and by the Reveal'd Law is to be underſtood, not only expreſs Commands and Prohibitions, but alſo the neceſſary conſequences of thoſe commands and prohibitions. So that whatever is by *direct inference* or *parity of reaſon* commanded or forbidden, is a Duty or a *Sin*; tho' it be not commanded or forbidden in the Letter of the Law. And if it be neither commanded nor forbidden by the Letter of the Law, nor yet by inference or parity of reaſon; the thing is indifferent, and we may do it, or let it alone, with a ſafe Conſcience.

III. In the third place I muſt conſider *the power of Human Laws to oblige the Conſcience*; for in a *ſecondary* ſence they are a part of the Rule of *Conſcience*, by vertue of, and in ſubordination to the Laws of God. This I ſhall explain in four propoſitions.

Firſt, It is moſt certain, that God's Law Commands us to obey the Laws of Men. For all Society is founded in this Principal *Law of Nature*, that we muſt obey our Governours in all honeſt and juſt things. Otherwiſe no State, City or Family can ſubſiſt happily. And 'tis moſt evident, that God Commands us in *Scripture* to *Obey them, that have the Rule over us*, and to *be Subject not only for Wrath, but alſo for Conſcience ſake*. So that a Man is bound in duty to obey Human Laws, and conſequently they are a part of the *Rule of Conſcience*.

Secondly, Human Laws do not bind the Conſcience by any Vertue in themſelves, but merely by Vertue of God's Law, who has commanded us both by *Nature* and *Scripture*, to obey our Superiours. Conſcience is *our judgment of our actions according to God's Law*, and has no Superiour but God alone: but yet we are bound in Conſcience to obey Men, becauſe therein we obey God.

Thirdly, Human Laws do no farther bind the Conſcience, than as they are agreeable to the Laws of God; ſo that when Men command any thing ſinful, we muſt not obey. For God has not given any Man power to alter his Laws, or impoſe any thing inconſiſtent with them.

Fourthly, Tho' Human Laws, generally ſpeaking, bind the Conſcience; yet I do not ſay, that every Human Law (tho' conſiſtent with God's Law) do's

do's at all times and in all caſes, oblige every Man's Conſcience to active obedience to it, ſo as that he ſins againſt God, if he tranſgreſs it. For then who could be innocent? But *Firſt*, where the Public or ſome private Perſon ſhall ſuffer damage or inconvenience by our not obſerving the Law; or *Secondly*, where the *Manner* of our not obeying it argues *contempt* of Authority, or ſets an ill example, there the tranſgreſſion of a Human Law is *ſinful*; and not in other caſes. So that there are many caſes, in which a Man may tranſgreſs a purely Human Law, and yet not be a ſinner before God; provided, I ſay, there be no contempt of Authority, or ill example in it; for either of theſe makes it a *ſin*. For this I inſiſt upon, that God's Law and the public good require, that *Authority* be held ſacred; and therefore when Governours inſiſt upon a thing, tho' it be trifling or inconvenient, yet we muſt not even *ſeem* to conteſt the matter with them, provided it be not *ſinful*. For to affront their Authority, or to encourage others by our example to do it, is a greater evil to the public, than our obedience to an inconvenient Law can eaſily be.

IV. I ſhall now conſider *the power of Human Laws to oblige the Conſcience in the inſtance of Church-Communion*. And here I affirm, That *every Man is bound in Conſcience to join with the Church eſtabliſh'd by Law in the place where he lives, ſo long as that Church is a true ſound part of the Catholic Church, and nothing ſinful is requir'd as a condition of Communion with it*. For I have already ſhewn, that Men are bound to obey Human Laws, that are not contrary to the Laws of God; and therefore they muſt obey in Church-Matters; unleſs it can be ſhew'd, that God has forbid-

den Men to make Laws about Religion; which can never be done.

But farther, I earneſtly deſire it may be well conſider'd by *Diſſenters*, that we are all really bound by the Laws of *Jeſus Chriſt* and the Nature of his Religion, to preſerve as much as in us lies, the Unity of the Church, which conſiſts not only in profeſſing the ſame faith, but joining together in the ſame worſhip. And therefore whoever breaks this Unity, doth really tranſgreſs the Laws of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and is guilty of *Schiſm*, which is ſo much caution'd againſt, and ſo highly condemn'd in *Scripture*.

Thoſe therefore, who think they are no more bound to *come to Church*, than to obey any common Act of Parliament, are greatly miſtaken; becauſe they break not only the Law of Man, but the Law of God. For tho' all the circumſtances of Worſhip are *Human Inſtitutions*, yet the Public Worſhip it ſelf, under Public Lawful Governours, is of Divine appointment; and no Man can renounce it without ſinning againſt *Chriſt* as well as *Human Laws*.

A *Divine Law* cloath'd with circumſtances of Man's appointment, creates another kind of obligation, than a Law, that commands a thing perfectly indifferent. In the former caſe we muſt obey, becauſe 'tis God's *own* Law; in the other we only obey Man, becauſe God has obliged us in general to obey our Superiours.

God commands every Subject *to pay tribute to whom tribute is due:* but Human Authority determines, out of what goods, and in what proportion he muſt pay. Now, becauſe Human Authority interpoſes, if a Man can by fraud detain the King's right, do's he incur no other guilt, than breaking

an Act of Parliament, and being liable to penalties, if he be detected? Yes certainly; for *Tribute* being injoin'd by God's Law, the Man is unjuſt, and breaks God's Law; and his willingneſs to ſuffer the penalties do's not leſſen his guilt. The Caſe is the ſame as to *Church-Unity*; for tho' Human Laws preſcribe particular circumſtances and Forms of Worſhip: yet God's Laws oblige us to keep the Unity of the Church, as much as to pay the King his due. And that Man, that paies his juſt debts by ſuch a method, as the Law of the Land declares to be unjuſt, may as well acquit himſelf from *knavery* before God; as that Man, that chuſes a way of public worſhip in oppoſition to the Church-Laws, can acquit himſelf of *Schiſm* before God. Nay, ſeparation from the Church is ſo much againſt the Law of God, that ſhou'd Human Laws grant a *Toleration*, and call no Man to an account for ſeparation from the eſtabliſh'd Church; yet ſuch a ſeparation wou'd ſtill be a Schiſm, and a Sin againſt God. For no Human Law can make that Lawful, which God's Law has forbidden.

V. It remains, that I ſpeak of the *Authority of Conſcience*, or *how far a Man is obliged to be guided by his Conſcience in his actions*; that is, how far we are obliged to act or not act, when we are convinc'd in our judgment, that the action is commanded or forbidden by God. Now our judgment concerning what God has commanded, or forbidden, or left indifferent, is either right or wrong. If right, we are ſaid to have a *right Conſcience*; if wrong, we have an *erroneous Conſcience*. There is alſo a *doubting Conſcience*, when we know not well how to make any judgment at all; but of this I ſhall Treat in another place.

Now

Now if our *Conſcience* or judgment be *right*, that is, according to God's Law, without doubt we are forever bound to act according to it; nor can we ſin in doing ſo, whatever the conſequence be. But the great queſtion is, what we muſt do, when our *Conſcience* is *erroneous* and miſtaken; and to anſwer this, I lay down three Rules, which I think, may give any Man ſatisfaction.

Firſt, *Where a Man is miſtaken in his judgment, even in that caſe it is alwaies a ſin to act againſt it.* Tho' we take a ſin for a duty, or a duty for a ſin: yet ſo long as we are thus perſuaded, it will be a great crime to act againſt this perſuaſion. Becauſe by ſo doing we act againſt the beſt light we have at preſent; and therefore our *will* is as wicked, as if it acted againſt a *true* light. Nothing but *Conſcience* can guide our actions; and tho' an *eroneous Conſcience* is a very bad and unſafe guide; yet ſtill 'tis the only guide we have: and if we may lawfully refuſe to be guided by it in one inſtance, we may with as much reaſon reject it's guidance in all. What is a wilful ſin, or a ſin againſt knowledge, but acting otherwiſe, than we were convinc'd to be our duty? Is not that Man thought ſincere, that acts as he believes; and that Man an hypocrite, that acts otherwiſe, whether his judgment be true or falſe? He, who being under a miſtake, acts contrary to his judgment, wou'd certainly upon the ſame temptation act contrary to it, were his judgment never ſo well inform'd. And therefore his *Will* being as bad in the one caſe as in the other, he is equally a ſinner as to the *Wilfulneſs* of the Crime, tho' indeed in other reſpects there will be a *great difference* in the caſes. Shou'd a *Jew* turn *Chriſtian*, or a *Papiſt* turn *Proteſtant*, while yet they believe their

their former Religions to be true, we ſhou'd all believe them to be great *Villains* and *Hypocrites*; becauſe they did it upon baſe principles, and in contradiction to their judgments. Nay we ſhou'd all think more favourably of a *Proteſtant*, that being ſeduced by a cunning *Papiſt*, did really out of Conſcience go over to the *Romaniſts*, than of ſuch Perſons. All this put together ſhews, that no Man can in any caſe act againſt his judgment, but he is guilty of ſin in ſo doing.

Secondly, *The miſtake of a Man's judgment may be of ſuch a nature, that as it will be a ſin to act againſt his judgment, ſo it will likewiſe be a ſin to act according to it.* For that action is good and a duty, which God has commanded, and that is a ſin which he has forbidden. 'Tis not our Opinion, but his Law, that makes things good or evil. And therefore we ſhall be forever obliged to do ſome actions and forbear others, whatever our judgment be; becauſe we cannot alter the Nature of things. For if the Moral *goodneſs* or *badneſs* of actions were to be meaſur'd by Mens opinions; then duty and ſin wou'd be the moſt uncertain things in the world, and what is good or evil to day, wou'd be the contrary to morrow, as any Man's opinion alters. But ſuch conſequences are intolerable; and therefore, tho' a Man do's follow his judgment, yet he may be guilty of ſin (and be damn'd for it too) if his judgment lead him to act againſt the Law of God.

But it muſt be obſerv'd, that I do not ſay, that every action according to a miſtaken judgment is ſinful; but that a Man's miſtake may be ſuch, that it will be a ſin to act either againſt it, or according to it. For a Man may often miſtake, and yet not ſin; provided his miſtakes do not lead him

him to a breach of God's Law. For *Firſt*, if a Man believe a thing to be commanded by God, which is neither commanded nor forbidden; as if he think himſelf obliged to Pray *ſeven* or *three times a day*; he is certainly miſtaken, becauſe God has bound him up to neither. And therefore, ſince God has not commanded the contrary, he may ſafely act according to his miſtake; nay, ſo long as his miſtake continues, he is bound to do ſo. *Secondly*, If a Man believe a thing to be forbidden by God, which is neither commanded nor forbidden; as if he think that God has forbidden him to play at Cards; in this caſe he may follow his falſe opinion without ſin; nay he is bound to follow it. Becauſe, ſince God has not forbidden it, 'tis no ſin to follow his miſtaken Conſcience; but it is a ſin to act againſt it. But then in other caſes, when a Man thinks that to be ſinful or indifferent, which God commands; or that to be Lawful or a Duty, which God forbids; here the miſtake is dangerous, and it is a ſin to act againſt his judgment, or according to it.

Thirdly therefore, for the untying this great difficulty, I ſay, *That the great thing to be attended to in this caſe of a Man's following a Miſtaken Judgment, is the faultineſs or innocence of the miſtake upon which he acts; for according as this is, ſo will his guilt in acting according to it, be either greater or leſs, or none at all.* If the miſtake be ſuch, as an honeſt minded Man might make; if he did his beſt to underſtand his duty, and wanted means to know it better; then we think him innocent, and not *properly* guilty of any ſin, tho' the action is contrary to God's Law. For no Man is obliged to do more, than what is in his power to do; and whatever a Man is not obliged to do, it is no

ſin

ſin in him, if he do it not. Since he cou'd not underſtand better, his miſtake and acting according to his miſtake are not ſinful.

The only point is this; whether the Man be to be blam'd for his *erroneous Conſcience*, or no. If the errour be not his own fault, he doth not ſin in acting according to it: but if he had power and opportunities of informing his Conſcience better, and yet neglected ſo to do, tho' it was his duty; then the Man ſins, while he acts contrary to God's Law under the miſtake; and his ſin is greater or leſs in proportion to his negligence. Thus you ſee, that God enables all Men to do their duty; and that none lie under a neceſſity of ſinning, but thoſe who wilfully embracing falſe Principles, fall into ſin, whether they act according to their Conſcience, or againſt it.

Having now done with the *Five* Principles of my Diſcourſe, I proceed to my firſt intended buſineſs; that is, to ſpeak to the Caſe of thoſe that *ſeparate from the Communion of the* Church *of* England *upon this pretence, That it is againſt their Conſcience to join with us in it.* And that I may clear this point, I ſhall do two things; *Firſt*, I ſhall *ſeparate thoſe who can plead Conſcience for their* Non-Conformity, *from thoſe that cannot*; for a great many that pretend Conſcience, refuſe Communion with us upon another Principle. *Secondly*, I ſhall enquire, *how far this Plea of Conſcience, when truly made, will juſtify any* Diſſenter, *that continues in ſeparation from the Church.*

Firſt then, that I may Diſtinguiſh the true Pretenders to Conſcience from the falſe ones, I ſhall lay down this propoſition, that *no Man can juſtly plead* Conſcience *for his ſeparation from the* Church *of* England, *or ſay, that it is againſt his Conſcience*

to

to join in Communion with it, unleſs he is perſuaded, that he cannot Communicate with us without ſinning againſt God in ſo doing. For God's Law is the only Rule to judge, whether an action be a Duty or a Sin, or indifferent; and Conſcience is nothing elſe, but a Man's judgment of an action, whether it be a Duty, or a Sin, or indifferent by that Rule. So that a Man cannot be *bound in Conſcience* to do or forbear any action, unleſs he is perſuaded, that God's Law has commanded or forbidden it; and therefore no Man can juſtly plead Conſcience for Non-Conformity, unleſs he is perſuaded, that God's Law has forbidden him to join with us.

If it be ſaid, that a Man, who do's not think our Communion directly ſinful, may notwithſtanding think it his duty to join conſtantly with others, for his greater Edification, or the like cauſe; I anſwer, that my propoſition ſtill holds, becauſe he thinks, that he is bound by God's Law to join with others, which Law he muſt not break by leaving them to join with us. *Again*, If it be ſaid, that a Man, who do's not think our Communion unlawful, but only doubts of the lawfulneſs of it, may juſtly plead Conſcience for Non-Conformity, ſo long as his doubts remain; I anſwer, that if he thinks it a ſin to do any thing with a doubting Conſcience, then he thinks, that our Communion is forbidden by God, ſo long as his doubts remain: but if he do's not think it a ſin to act with a doubting Conſcience, then it cannot go againſt his Conſcience to join with us. So that my propoſition remains true, that none can juſtly plead Conſcience for Non-Conformity, but thoſe who think, that they cannot join with us without ſin.

Now

Now ſince this propoſition is ſo certainly true, how many Men's pretences to Conſcience for their ſeparating from us, are hereby cut off? For *Firſt*, thoſe that ſeparate, either becauſe they have been diſobliged by ſome Church-Man, or to pleaſe a Relation, or increaſe their Fortunes, or procure or regain a Reputation, or for any other worldly conſideration, cannot plead Conſcience for ſeparation. Nor *Secondly*, can thoſe Lay-People, who are reſolv'd to hear their beloved *Teachers* in Conventicles, ſince they cannot hear them in our Churches, and who wou'd join with us, if we wou'd ſuffer thoſe *Godly* Men to Preach; nor *Thirdly*, thoſe who diſlike *Forms* of Prayer, *Ceremonies*, &c. thinking them not convenient, tho' they do not judge them to be ſinful; nor *Fourthly*, thoſe who ſeparate upon the Account of *Edification*, or acquaintance with Perſons of another perſuaſion; or becauſe many *Godly* Perſons condemn our way; all theſe, I ſay, cannot juſtly plead Conſcience for their ſeparation. Becauſe neither fancy, nor example can be the Rule of any Man's Conſcience, but only the Law of God: and therefore ſuch Perſons cannot juſtly plead Conſcience, becauſe they do not think our Communion to be forbidden by God's Law. Nor *Fifthly*, can thoſe plead Conſcience for their ſeparation, who think that our Governours have encroach'd too much upon *Chriſtian Liberty*, and laid too much ſtreſs upon *indifferent things*; for ſuppoſe the Governours be faulty in it, yet the *Conſcience* of the Subject is not concern'd, ſo long as the things commanded do not interfere with any Law of God. Nor *Sixthly*, can thoſe juſtly plead Conſcience for their ſeparation, who can join with us ſometimes both in Prayer and the Lord's Supper; for if our Com-

munion be ſinful, with what Conſcience do they dare to join in it at all? and if it be lawful once, it is a duty alwaies.

But leaving theſe falſe pretenders, I proceed to the caſe of thoſe, that can juſtly plead Conſcience for their ſeparation, or who think it a ſin to join with us; for I ſhall conſider the caſe of thoſe that plead a *doubting Conſcience* afterwards, in a particular diſcourſe.

Secondly therefore, I ſhall inquire *how far this Plea of Conſcience, when truly made, will juſtify any* Diſſenter, *that continues in ſeparation from the Church.* For there are many, that ſay, they wou'd join with us with all their hearts, but they are really perſuaded, they cannot do it without ſin. For they think, that it is againſt the command of Chriſt to uſe *Forms* of Prayer, the Croſs in Baptiſm, kneeling at the Sacrament, and the like. And ſurely, ſay they, you wou'd not have us join in theſe practices, which we verily believe to be ſins. They are ſo well ſatisfy'd in their ſeparation upon theſe accounts, that they think themſelves ſafe, and that they are able to juſtify themſelves to God and all the world.

Now in anſwer to this, I grant, that if the things they except againſt, be really forbidden by God, then they are not to be blam'd; for then ſeparation from us is not a ſin, but a duty. Nay, ſuppoſing that they think that to be forbidden, which is not really forbidden; yet ſo long as they think ſo, they cannot act againſt their miſtaken Conſcience without ſin. But then the point we ſtand upon is this, that *our Governours do require nothing that is forbidden by God*; and therefore their thinking our Communion unlawful will not acquit them from being guilty of ſin before God.

I am

I am not now to anſwer the particular objections againſt our eſtabliſhments. This has been ſufficiently done already in the ſeveral foregoing Chapters. The Point I am concern'd in, is this, whether a Man's thinking our Communion to be unlawful, when indeed it is not unlawful, will juſtify his ſeparation from it: and I anſwer, that a Man's falſe perſuaſion will not juſtify his breaking of God's Law. So that if God's Law do's command me to hold Communion with the Church where I have no juſt cauſe to break it, my falſe perſuaſion will not acquit me from ſin before God, if I ſeparate from it without juſt cauſe.

Tho' the truth of this appears from what I have ſaid before, yet I ſhall further confirm it by asking this queſtion. When St. *Paul* thought himſelf bound in duty to perſecute Chriſtians, was his perſecution ſinful, or no? Yes ſurely; for he call's himſelf *the greateſt of ſinners* for that very reaſon. And therefore a Man's thinking a thing to be a *duty* or lawful, will not acquit him before God for doing that thing, if it be againſt God's Law. So that it infinitely concerns all *Diſſenters* to conſider well, before they ſeparate. For Schiſm is a crying ſin, and as vehemently ſpoken againſt by Chriſt, and his Apoſtles, and the Fathers, as any ſin whatever. Let *Diſſenters* look to it, that they be not guilty of it; for their falſe perſuaſion, that our Communion is unlawful, will not make their ſeparation to be no Schiſm.

This matter will appear a little more evident, if we put the caſe in another inſtance, wherein we are not ſo nearly concern'd. Suppoſe a *Papiſt*, that heartily believes *Popery* to be the only true Reli-

gion, do's in obedience to it worſhip Images and the Hoſt. This perſon wou'd certainly abhor theſe practices, did he think them to be Idolatrous; but he believes them to be neceſſary duties. And yet we do all charge ſuch *Papiſts* with *Idolatry*, tho' they diſclaim it, and profeſs they do no more than their duty, when they give divine worſhip to ſuch objects. And we charge them rightly in this; for if it be really *Idolatry* by God's word to do ſo; then it will be *Idolatry* in any Man to do ſo, let his opinion be what it will. For a Man's falſe opinion doth not alter the nature of things. Now the caſe is the ſame in the matter before us; for cauſeleſs ſeparation is as properly *Schiſm*, as worſhipping a Creature is *Idolatry*: and he is as much a *Schiſmatic*, who thinks it his duty to ſeparate, as he is an *Idolater*, who thinks it his duty to worſhip a Creature. A Man's miſtake, according to the greater or leſs *culpability* of it, will more or leſs excuſe him before God in both inſtances: but it cannot change the nature either of *Schiſm* or *Idolatry*.

But it will be ſaid; What ſhall a Man do? He cannot Conform with a ſafe Conſcience; and yet he ſins, if he do not. I anſwer, he is to take all imaginable care to rectify his miſtakes, and then he may do his duty without ſinning againſt his Conſcience. Now the only way of doing this, is by laying aſide Pride, Paſſion, Intereſt and all other Carnal prepoſſeſſions, and endeavouring ſeriouſly and impartially to underſtand his duty; conſidering without prejudice, what can be ſaid on both ſides, adviſing with the wiſeſt Men, and above all things ſeriouſly endeavouring to underſtand the Nature and ſpirit of the *Chriſtian Religion*, practiſing all undoubted duties, and begging God's

God's Aſſiſtance for the Matters in queſtion.

Well, but ſuppoſing a Man has done all this, and after all his endeavours is perſuaded that he cannot join with us without ſin; what ſhall this Man do? This is the great difficulty, and I have two things to ſay to it.

Firſt, We do heartily wiſh, that this was the Caſe of our *Diſſenters*; for then I am perſuaded, our ſcandalous diviſions wou'd preſently be at an end. But alas! we fear they have not done their duty in this Matter; that they have not heartily endeavour'd to ſatisfy themſelves. If they had; ſurely they ſhou'd, before they pronounc'd *Conformity* to be unlawful, be able to produce ſome one plain Text to prove it ſo. For the Texts they produce are ſuch, as had they in the leaſt examin'd them, cou'd ſcarce have been wreſted to ſuch a ſence. Nay, the generality of *Diſſenters* do not ſeem to have much conſulted their own Teachers in this affair. If they had, they wou'd think better of our way than they do. For the moſt eminent of their own Miniſters are ready to declare, that tho' ſome things may be inconvenient, yet a *Lay-Perſon* may lawfully join with us in all things; nay, they themſelves are ready upon occaſion to join in all the inſtances of *Lay-Communion*. In ſhort, moſt of our *Diſſenters* have taken up their opinions hand over head, and ſcarce think it poſſible for them to be in the wrong.

Shew us a Man, that has no end to ſerve by Religion, but only to go to heaven, and in the choice of his way is only concern'd that it be the way that leads him thither; that is wonderfully ſollicitous about his duty, and will refuſe no pains to underſtand it; that in the midſt of Church-diviſions is modeſt, humble and docible, and believes

lieves that he and his friends may be miſtaken; that thinks his Governours may be wiſer than himſelf, and that every opinion, that he has inconſiderately taken up, ought not to be maintain'd againſt Authority; a Man, that where his duty to God ſeems to thwart his duty to Man, endeavours to be truly inform'd; and to that end begs God's aſſiſtance, and uſes the beſt helps and guides he can, hears and reads the arguments on both ſides, and is byaſſed neither way; I ſay, ſhew us ſuch a Man, and we readily grant, he has done his beſt to ſatisfy himſelf. But then we muſt add, that we believe, ſuch a Man will ſoon think it, not only lawful, but his Duty alſo to Conform.

Secondly, If a Man has really done his beſt to ſatisfy his Conſcience, and yet thinks it a ſin to Conform; tho' his ſeparation be *materially* a *Schiſm*, yet he is not *formally* guilty of it. For all thoſe that commit *Schiſm*, are not equally guilty of it. Thoſe that ſeparate to ſerve a turn, are horribly and inexcuſably guilty of *Schiſm*; and thoſe that ſeparate thro' ſuch miſtakes, as they might have avoided if they had been careful, are very blameable, and are bound, as they love their ſouls, to take more care of informing their Conſciences, that ſo they may leave their ſin: but when God, who *ſearches the hearts*, knows that a Man did his beſt, and had not means or opportunities of underſtanding better; then tho' the Man commit Schiſm, yet he is innocent of it. And God, who judgeth of Men by their inward ſincerity, will impute it to his ignorance, and forgive it at the laſt day; eſpecially if this innocently miſtaken Man be careful in the following points.

Firſt, that he be not obſtinate, but ready to receive

ceive Conviction. *Secondly*, That he ſeparate no more, than he needs muſt; but comply in all thoſe inſtances, where he is ſatisfy'd he may do it with a ſafe Conſcience. *Thirdly*, That where he cannot comply, he *patiently* ſubmit to the penalty of the Law; neither exclaiming at his Governours or the Magiſtrates, nor uſing illegal means to get more liberty, but living as a quiet and peaceable Subject. *Fourthly*, That he do not cenſure thoſe of another perſuaſion, but ſhew himſelf a good Neighbour and friendly to them. Whoe're obſerves theſe things, tho' he diſſent from us, I ſhall be loth to cenſure him as an *ill Man, ill Subject*, or *ill Chriſtian*.

But then all that I have ſaid, do's no more juſtify or leſſen the ſin of *Schiſm*, than the ſin of *Idolatry*; for the caſe is the ſame in both, whether the Man be a deluded *Diſſenter*, or a deluded *Papiſt*. And therefore, notwithſtanding all that may be ſaid concerning the innocence or excuſableneſs of ſome Mens miſtakes about theſe matters; yet nevertheleſs, it infinitely concerns every Perſon, to have a care how he be engaged either in the one or the other.

To conclude; I have ſhewn how abſolutely neceſſary 'tis, that every Man ſhou'd endeavour to inform himſelf aright, before he diſobey his Governours or ſeparate from the Church; and that tho' ſomething in our worſhip be really againſt his Conſcience, yet ſeparation may be a great ſin, if a Man ſhou'd prove to be miſtaken in his Notions. And therefore every *Diſſenter* ought preſently to ſet about the true informing of his judgment, for fear he live in a grievous ſin.

Let him not ſatisfy himſelf with frivolous pretences. For tho' we agree in the rule of *faith* and

manners; yet *Schiſm* is a dreadful ſin, and a Man may be damn'd for that as certainly, as for *hereſy* or *drunkenneſs*. Sure I am, the ancient Fathers thought ſo. What if the points of *Conformity* be matters of diſpute? Who made them ſo? The *Church* of *England* wou'd have been well pleas'd, if theſe Controverſies had never been. We think a Man may be a very good *Chriſtian* and go to heaven, that is not able to defend our Ceremonies, &c. but he that ſeparates upon the account of them, is bound at the peril of his own Salvation, to uſe the beſt means he can, to be ſatisfy'd about them.

To thoſe that pretend, that theſe are ſubtil points above their capacity, I anſwer, that ſince they have underſtanding enough to find fault and ſeparate, they ought to have honeſty enough to ſeek ſatisfaction; which is all that we deſire of them: otherwiſe they will never be able to anſwer to God or Man for the Miſchiefs of Separation.

We are bound, eſpecially in this caſe, to *prove all things, and hold faſt that which is good.* For no Man can diſobey his Superiours without ſin, unleſs after he has us'd his beſt endeavours, he finds their commands inconſiſtent with his duty to God. For a Man to diſobey till he has done this, is an unwarrantable thing; and in the Caſe I now ſpeak of, it is no leſs than the ſin of *Formal Criminal Schiſm.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

The pretence of a Doubting Conſcience Anſwer'd.

I Come now to the Caſe of thoſe, who ſeparate, becauſe they *doubt*, whether they may lawfully Communicate with us or no; and who fear they ſhou'd ſin in doing any thing with a *doubting Conſcience*. To this I might anſwer from the former *Chapter*; that if Communion with our Church be a Duty, no Man's *doubts* concerning the lawfulneſs of it, will juſtify his ſeparation from it. For if a Man's *ſetled Perſuaſion*, that an action is unlawful, will not juſtify his omiſſion of it, ſuppoſing that God commands it; much leſs will his bare *doubt* excuſe him.

But becauſe this anſwer ſeems rather to cut the knot, than to unty it, I ſhall particularly examine this Plea of a *doubting Conſcience*, by giving an account, *Firſt*, Of the *nature* of a *doubting Conſcience*. *Secondly*, Of the *Rule* of it. *Thirdly*, Of the *Power that Human Laws have over it*. *Fourthly*, Of its *Authority, i. e.* whether at all, or how far a Man is obliged by it.

I. In ſpeaking of the *Nature* of a *doubting Conſcience* I ſhall Treat, 1. Of *doubting* in General. 2. Of ſuch *doubts* as affect the *Conſcience*. 3. Of the difference between the *doubting* and the *ſcrupulous Conſcience*.

Firſt Then, A Man is ſaid to *doubt*, when he cannot determin, whether the thing he is conſidering, be ſo, or be not ſo; he thinks the *queſtion* probable on both ſides, but cannot fix upon either.

So that his mind is like a ballance, when by reaſon of equal weight in both Scales, neither Scale comes to the bottom. 'Tis true, a Man may lean more to one ſide of the *queſtion*, than the other; and yet be doubtful ſtill; juſt as one Scale may have more Weight than the other, while yet that Weight is not able to carry it perfectly down: but when there is ſo much more evidence on one ſide, that the mind can determin it ſelf, then the Man *doubts* no longer, but is ſaid to be *Perſuaded*; as the Ballance is ſaid to be fixt, when there is Weight enough to carry it down on either ſide. 'Tis true, a Man has not alwaies the ſame degree of *Perſuaſion*. Sometimes the evidence is ſo ſtrong, that he intirely aſſents without the leaſt doubtfulneſs. This is *Aſſurance* or *full Perſuaſion*. At other times the evidence may gain an Aſſent, but not ſuch as excludes all doubts of the contrary. This kind of *Aſſent* is call'd *Opinion* or *probable Perſuaſion*. So a greater or leſs Weight carries down the Scale with greater or leſs force and briskneſs. But ſtill, in both theſe Caſes, the Mind is determin'd, the Ballance is turn'd, and the doubt is ended; tho' perhaps the Man is not perfectly free from all ſcruple about that thing.

Secondly then, I ſhall Treat of ſuch *doubts* as affect the Conſcience. A Man may doubt of any thing, which he has to conſider, but every doubt do's not affect the Conſcience. As a Man's Conſcience is affected with nothing but his own actions, ſo his doubts do not affect his Conſcience any farther, than they concern his own actions. And as his Conſcience is not affected with his own actions any otherwiſe, than as they are commanded or forbidden by God's Laws; ſo his doubts concerning them affect his Conſcience no otherwiſe, than

than as God's Law may be tranſgreſſed in them. So that, where a Man apprehends no danger of tranſgreſſing God's Law, his doubts about an action do not concern his Conſcience.

Thirdly, From what has been ſaid 'tis eaſie to perceive the difference between the *doubting* and the *Scrupulous Conſcience*. Every body knows, that when we ſpeak of a *Reſolved Conſcience*, we mean, that the Man is ſatisfy'd, whether the action be a Duty or a Sin, or indifferent. Now *the Scrupulous Conſcience is a Conſcience in ſome meaſure Reſolved, but yet accompanied with a fear of acting according to that reſolution.* The Perſon is convinced, that the thing is fit to be done, and has nothing conſiderable to object, nor any new reaſons to unſettle him; but yet when he comes to act, he is troubled with unaccountable fears. But the *doubting Conſcience* is quite different, and is nothing elſe but *the ſuſpenſe of a Man's judgment in a queſtion about the Duty or the Sin of an Action, occaſion'd by the equal (or near equal) probabilities on both ſides.* The reſolv'd Conſcience acts chearfully; the ſcrupulous Conſcience acts fearfully: but the doubtful Conſcience is not ſatisfy'd at all, becauſe of the equal appearances of reaſon on both ſides. The Man that has either a reſolv'd or a ſcrupulous Conſcience, paſſes a judgment on the thing: but a doubting Conſcience paſſes no judgment at all; for then it wou'd no longer be a doubting Conſcience.

After all it muſt be acknowledg'd, that truly and ſtrictly ſpeaking, a doubting Conſcience is no Conſcience at all. For *Conſcience*, as we have often ſaid, *is a Man's mind making a judgment about the morality of his actions*: but a doubting Conſcience wavers, and is *a Man's mind making no judgment*; and therefore it is not properly a Conſcience. And we may

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as well ſay *an unreſolv'd reſolution*, as *a Doubting Conſcience*. However, to comply with Cuſtom, I follow the Common way of ſpeaking.

II. I proceed now to the *Rule* of a *doubting Conſcience*; in ſpeaking of which I ſhall ſhew, *Firſt*, what kind of Rule Conſcience needs in a doubtful caſe. *Secondly*, what that Rule is.

Firſt then, by the Rule of a doubting Conſcience I mean, not a Rule by which a Man may reſolve all doubts concerning every point, ſo as to doubt no longer about it; but a Rule, by which he may determine in every doubtful caſe, ſo as to act with a ſafe Conſcience, whether he can get rid of his doubts or not. A Rule, that determines, not whether a thing in general be lawful, or no; but what I am to do, where I doubt of the Lawfulneſs of the thing. For inſtance, the Rule of a doubting Conſcience is not to determine, whether is be Lawful to play at Cards; but what I muſt do, if I doubt of the Lawfulneſs of playing at Cards.

Before a Man acts, he ought to be ſatisfy'd, that that ſide of the action, he determines himſelf to, is, all things conſider'd, the more fit and reaſonable to be choſen: but it is abſurd to ſay, that no Man muſt act, till he is able to unty all the difficulties, and reſolve all the doubts, that may have been ſtarted about the Action. For this in many caſes is utterly impoſſible; the Perſon may not have ſufficient time or means for the doing it. And in ſuch a caſe, a man cannot poſſibly do better, than to get ſatisfy'd by reaſon and advice, what is fitteſt for him to do in the preſent circumſtances, and to proceed accordingly. And this is certainly the the uſual way of proceeding among the moſt conſcientious men. Thus have I ſhewn what kind

of

of Rule Conſcience needs in a doubtful caſe.

Secondly therefore, I ſhall ſhew what that Rule is, *firſt* by giving an account of the general Rule it ſelf; and then *ſecondly*, by applying it to the ſeveral Heads of doubtful caſes.

1. *Firſt* then, ſince a Man never doubts but upon equal appearances of Reaſon on both ſides, it is plain, that nothing ought to turn the Ballance, but greater weight of Reaſon; and therefore the Rule of a doubting Conſcience is, *That in all doubtful caſes, that ſide which, all things conſider'd, doth appear more reaſonable, is to be choſen.*

Some indeed ſay, that *in doubtful caſes the ſafer ſide is to be choſen:* but I do purpoſely avoid the expreſſing it ſo, becauſe the Rule is true or falſe, according as the word *ſafer ſide* is expounded.

For *Firſt*, if by *ſafer ſide* we mean that ſide which is more free from danger of ſinning, I think the Rule will prove rather a Snare, than a Guide to a Man's mind. For if this Rule be true, moſt Perſons do tranſgreſs it every day; nay the beſt of men do frequently expoſe themſelves to ſuch dangers of ſinning, as they might have avoided; and this without any reproach from their own Conſcience, or any cenſure from other men. He that avoids all entertainments, is certainly more free from the danger of intemperance, than others are; and yet when occaſion ſerves, no Man makes any great ſcruple of going to them. We are not commanded to avoid all poſſible danger of ſinning; but only to avoid all ſin, when we are in danger. For otherwiſe, he that wou'd be Religious, muſt forſake all worldly buſineſs, and retire to a Cloyſter.

But to come more ſtrictly to the point; there are many caſes, in which the moſt honeſt Perſon do's not think he is obliged to determine himſelf

to

to that ſide of the action, on which he apprehends there is leaſt danger of ſinning. For *Firſt*, greater *probability* will often turn the Ballance againſt the greater *ſafety*. Thus if a Man ſcruple eating *Blood*, and afterwards by diſcourſing with a Learned Perſon be ſatisfy'd, that it is far more probable that he may Lawfully eat it, than that he is forbidden to eat it; I believe moſt men will think, that he may eat it with a quiet Conſcience. And yet it is certainly more ſafe not to eat it; becauſe many do queſtion whether it be Lawful to do ſo, but all men grant it may be Lawfully forborn. *Secondly*, greater *temporal advantages* will have weight enough with a very honeſt Man to over-ballance the greater *ſafety*. Thus if after the ſtricteſt inquiry a Man be not ſatisfy'd, that he owes a ſum of Money, which another demands confidently and with great appearances of Reaſon; there are equal *probabilities* on both ſides. If he pay the Money, perhaps his circumſtances are ſuch, that he wrongs his Wife and Children; and if he refuſe to pay it, perhaps he detains another Man's right from him. In this caſe, ſince it is as probable that the demand is *unjuſt*, as that it is *juſt*; I believe moſt men will ſay, that he ought not to prejudice himſelf and his family, till it be either by Law adjudg'd, or he have more convincing proofs, that he ought to pay it. It appears therefore, that any Man (who is wiſe as well as good) may in many caſes wave the *ſafer* for the more *Prudent* ſide; and conſequently it is not alwaies a Rule to a doubting Conſcience to chuſe the *ſafer* ſide, or the ſide which is more free from danger of ſinning.

But *Secondly*, if by *ſafer ſide* we mean that which is *freeſt from all dangers and inconveniences of all kinds whatſoever*, and do's beſt ſerve all the *Spiritual* and

and *Temporal* intereſts that a *wiſe* and *good* Man can propoſe; I freely grant, that it is the *only* Rule to a doubting Conſcience to follow the *ſafer ſide*. For then the *ſafer ſide* is the *more reaſonable ſide*, which, as I ſaid before, *is in all doubtful caſes to be choſen*.

2. Having given an account of the general Rule of a doubting Conſcience, I come now in the *Second* place to make application of it to the ſeveral Heads of doubtful caſes. Now all doubts of Conſcience are either *ſingle* or *double*. It is a *ſingle* doubt, when a Man doubts on one ſide, but is ſatisfy'd on the other. For inſtance, he doubts, whether it be Lawful to do the action, but is ſatisfy'd he may Lawfully omit it; or he doubts whether he may Lawfully omit it, but is ſatisfy'd he may Lawfully do it. It is a *double* doubt, when a Man doubts on both ſides; when he is at a loſs what to do, becauſe he fears he may ſin, whether he do's the action or do's it not.

Firſt, as to the caſe of a *ſingle* doubt, we may thus apply the *General Rule*. When a Man doubts only on one ſide, it is more *reaſonable*, if all other Conſiderations be equal, to chuſe that ſide which he hath no doubt of. In ſuch a caſe *we muſt not do what we doubt of*; for it is unreaſonable to run the riſque of ſinning, when a Man can without any inconveniency avoid it. If a Man doubt, whether it be Lawful for a Chriſtian *to go to Law*, and cannot poſitively determine with himſelf, whether it be *Lawful* or *Unlawful* ſo to do; in this and all other ſuch-like caſes the Rule is plain, that while he doubts, it is more reaſonable to forbear; becauſe he runs a hazard in venturing upon what he doubts of, but he runs no hazard in forbearing. But then if there be other Conſiderations to overballance

ballance this Conſideration of *uncertainty*; it will be more reaſonable to chuſe that ſide, which I did before doubt of. Nay it is our Duty ſo to do; for if I doubt, I do by *doubting* own, that I cannot tell whether the action be *Lawful* or *Unlawful*; and ſurely then the weight of preſſing Conſiderations ought to turn the Ballance; otherwiſe I cannot anſwer to my ſelf or the World, for the conſequences that may enſue. Thus if I am Guardian to an Orphan, whoſe Eſtate is ſo entangled, that a Law-ſuit is neceſſary for the clearing it; I am obliged, notwithſtanding my doubt, to ſecure his Right by going to Law. To conclude; it is not only *Lawful*, but *Adviſable*, to do that which we doubt of, if a great good may be compaſs'd, or a great evil may be avoided by the doing of it.

Secondly, in the caſe of a *double* doubt, when a Man fears he may ſin, whether he do the action or do's it not, it is in vain to ſay, he muſt get his doubt remov'd; for perhaps that may be impoſſible thro' want of time or good Counſel. He is therefore to follow the ſame Rule as in other doubtful Caſes; that is to ſay, *he is to act as reaſonably as he can*: and if he do this, I am ſure he incurs no blame. But becauſe the application of this *General Rule* is various, according to many circumſtances that may happen, therefore I ſhall compriſe all the varieties in theſe *Four* following Propoſitions.

1. If the ſin we are afraid of, appear equal on both ſides, we muſt do that, which we doubt the leaſt of; that is, we muſt do that which appears *more probable* to be free from the danger of ſin. 2. If we think there is equal danger on both ſides, we muſt do that which appears to be the leſs ſin. 3. If we think the one ſide more probable, and the

the other leſs ſinful; we muſt act according to the degree of the probability, or the ſin. If there be much more probability on the one ſide than on the other, and but ſmall difference between the ſins; then we muſt act that which is more *probable*. But then, if the conſequences on one ſide, if a Man ſhou'd happen to be miſtaken, be ſo terrible, that they over-ballance all the probabilities on the other ſide; a wiſe Man will act that, which ſets him free from theſe conſequences. Thus if a Man be try'd for his Life, and the Evidence againſt him be not ſo full as to create a perſuaſion in the Jury that he is Guilty; in this caſe, they ſhou'd rather acquit him, notwithſtanding ſome probabilities of his Guilt, than run the hazard of doing *Murder* by condemning the innocent. 4. If a Man doubts equally on both ſides, and the ſin appear equal on both ſides; then his own *eaſe*, or *advantage*, or *reputation*, or any other *prudential* inducements muſt determine him to do the action he doubts about, or to let it alone. When all is ſaid, every Man in doubtful caſes is left to his own diſcretion; and if he acts according to the beſt Reaſon he has, he is not culpable, tho' he be miſtaken in his meaſures.

But to render theſe Rules about a *double* doubt more intelligible and more uſeful, I ſhall give the Reader an inſtance of a Caſe, in which they are all apply'd. The caſe is this,

'Here is a Man, that thinks it his Duty to receive 'the *Sacrament* conſtantly, or at leaſt frequently; 'but on the other ſide, tho' no grievous ſin lies upon 'his Conſcience unrepented of, yet by reaſon of his 'miſtakes about the Nature and Ends of the *Lord's* '*Supper*, and the diſpoſitions that fit a Man for it, he 'is under great fears of his being unqualify'd for it.

'Now the queſtion is, what this Man, who after all 'his endeavours cannot get over theſe difficulties, 'ought to do. For if he do not come to the *Sacra-* '*ment*, he doubts he ſins on that account; if he do 'come, he doubts he approaches unworthily, and ſo 'ſins upon that account. Shall he *receive* the *Sacra-* '*ment* doubting as he do's? or ſhall he *forbear it* 'doubting as he do's?

'Now a Man cannot reſolve this queſtion, but by 'applying the foregoing Rules after this manner.

'*Firſt*, ſince the Man doubteth, that he ſins, 'whether he come to the Sacrament or forbear; it 'muſt be conſider'd, which ſide appears moſt likely 'to free him from ſin. Now I am confident, he will 'think it more reaſonable to come meanly prepar'd 'than cuſtomarily to abſtain; becauſe he is much 'more certain, that 'tis his duty to frequent it, than 'that he is unprepar'd for it. Indeed were he a de- 'bauch'd perſon, or had he been lately guilty of 'ſome notorious Sin, and came to the Lord's Table 'with that ſin unrepented of; he had reaſon to dread 'unworthy receiving, as much as abſtaining: but 'ſince the caſe is quite otherwiſe, ſince he is miſ- 'taken while he thinks himſelf unworthy; certain- 'ly he runs a greater danger by abſenting himſelf, 'than by coming with his doubts about him. Be- 'cauſe his doubts of his unworthineſs, being only 'ſurmiſes, cannot poſſibly be ſo well grounded, as 'his doubts, that he ſins by habitually abſtaining, 'which is expreſly forbidden by God's Law.

'*Secondly*, Tho' it can hardly be ſuppos'd in our 'caſe, yet let us ſuppoſe, that the Man has as much rea- 'ſon to believe, that he is an *unworthy receiver*, if he 'receive at all; as he has to believe, that it is a ſin in 'him if he do not receive; the queſtion then is, which 'is the leaſt ſin, to *receive unworthily* out of a ſence

'of

'of duty, or *not to receive at all.* For the leaſt ſin is 'to be choſen, when he cannot avoid both. For 'my part I think, that a Man, who obeys one '*known* Law of God for *Conſcience* ſake, when he 'cannot do it without breaking another law in the '*manner* of performance; I ſay, I think that that 'man, tho' he is not innocent, yet is *far leſs* guil-'ty, than he who omits a *known* duty, and ſo 'breaks a *known* Law of God for *Conſcience* ſake. 'Suppoſe two Men, who know themſelves to be 'unfit ſo much as to ſay their Prayers; one of 'theſe Men doth upon this account forbear all 'Prayers; the other dares not to forbear his uſual 'offices, tho' he believes he performs them ſinful-'ly. Now I dare ſay, that all Men will think 'him the better Man, who ſays his Prayers; tho' 'both of them be very faulty. Becauſe whatever 'a Man's indiſpoſition be, he is oblig'd to do his 'duty as well as he can; and it is better to per-'form a duty after an ill *manner*, than wholly to 'omit it. Since therefore the *greater* ſin is to be 'avoided, when a Man is under a neceſſity of com-'mitting *one*; it's more *reaſonable* that a Man ſhou'd 'come to the *Sacrament*, doubting of his unwor-'thineſs, than that he ſhou'd habitually abſtain 'from it.

'If it be ſaid, that *he that eateth and drinketh un-'worthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf*; '1 Cor. 11. 29. and that there cannot be a greater 'ſin, than that which will actually *damn* a Man: 'I anſwer, that let the ſin of receiving unworthily 'be as damnable, as we can reaſonably ſuppoſe it; 'yet the ſin of totally withdrawing from it, is much 'greater and more damnable. So that if he who 'partakes unworthily, doth *eat and drink damna-'tion to himſelf*; he that partakes not at all, is ſo

'far from mending the matter, that he doth much 'increaſe that damnation. And certainly, did Men 'ſeriouſly conſider what a ſin it is to live without 'the Sacrament, and what dreadful conſequences they 'bring upon themſelves hereby, they wou'd not 'look upon it as ſo ſlight a matter to neglect it: 'but what apprehenſions ſoever they had of the ſin 'and danger of receiving unworthily, they wou'd 'think it more ſinful and more dangerous not to 'receive at all.

'*Thirdly*, Suppoſe the Man takes all opportuni-'ties of receiving the Sacrament, tho' perhaps he 'is not often very well ſatisfy'd about his prepara-'tion: but ſince his laſt receiving he finds he has 'liv'd more looſly than he was wont, or he has 'been very lately guilty of ſome grievous ſin; ſo 'that he thinks himſelf unfit to receive at his next 'uſual time. Upon this he is in a great perplexi-'ty; for he thinks he has more reaſon to believe 'he ſins, if he receives in theſe circumſtances, than 'if he forbears; becauſe he is more certain that 'God forbids him to receive unworthily, than he 'is certain, that God commands him to receive 'upon every opportunity. But then if he be re-'ally bound to receive upon every opportunity, he 'is ſenſible in that caſe, it is a greater ſin to neglect 'this duty, than to perform it unworthily, ſo long 'ſtill as he performs it out of Conſcience. On 'one ſide he runs a greater danger of ſinning; on 'the other, if he be miſtaken, he ſins in a greater 'degree. What now is the Man to do in this 'caſe.

'I anſwer; *Firſt*, It is very reaſonable that he ſhou'd 'forbear receiving, once or twice, for his exerciſe 'of repentance and better preparation againſt ano-'ther opportunity. Becauſe, ſince we have no rea-

'ſon

'ſon to think that God has commanded us to re-
'ceive ſo many times a year, any more than that
'we ſhou'd pray ſo many times a day; we are not
'oblig'd by an expreſs Law to receive upon every
'opportunity: but there is an expreſs law againſt re-
'ceiving unworthily, and therefore there is greater
'danger in doing ſo. So that the conſideration of
'the certain danger ought to over ballance that of
'the greater ſin; and the Man ought rather to de-
'fer his receiving, than to receive in his preſent
'circumſtances. But *Secondly*, a Man muſt not ha-
'bitually abſent himſelf upon the the account of
'unworthineſs. For I have ſhewn, that there is
'more danger of ſinning by not receiving at all,
'than by receiving unworthily; and there is a much
'greater ſin in wholly withdrawing, than in coming
'with never ſo great fears of being unfit. And
'therefore he muſt receive frequently, tho' he be
'in danger of doing it unworthily; rather than not
'receive at all.

'*Fourthly*, if the Perſon think, that the danger
'of ſinning and the ſin it ſelf are equal, whether he
'receive or no; then he is to conſider the in-
'ducements of Prudence and Intereſt, and they are
'to turn the ballance. And it is plain, that it is
'better to receive than to forbear, upon thoſe ac-
'counts. For beſides the temporal advantages of re-
'ceiving, he reaps this Spiritual profit by it, *viz.*
'that he takes the beſt method of growing more
'*worthy*, and curing his *doubts*; whereas by ab-
'ſenting himſelf his doubts increaſe, and he is in
'great danger of loſing that ſenſe of Religion, which
'he now has.

Thus have I ſhewn how to apply all the Rules concerning a *double doubt*; and if I have dwelt too long upon this ſubject, I hope the

frequency and importance of the caſe will excuſe me.

III. Having ſetled the *Notion* and *Rule* of a Doubting Conſcience, I come now in the *Third* place to ſpeak of *the power of human Laws over a Doubting Conſcience.* And my aſſertion is, that wherever lawful Authority has commanded an action, that command is (generally ſpeaking) a ſufficient warrant for a Man to do that action, tho' he doubts whether in it ſelf it be lawful or no. That I may ſpeak clearly to this point, I ſhall, 1. premiſe ſome things. 2. ſhew the grounds of my aſſertion. 3. anſwer the Objections brought againſt it.

1. I premiſe Five things. *Firſt*, That no Authority upon earth can oblige Men to do what God forbids, or to forbear what God commands. *Secondly*, If a Man thinks that thing, which his Governours oblige him to, is ſinful; tho' he be miſtaken, he cannot obey them without ſinning. But then, if he be miſtaken, he alſo ſins in diſobeying; if he be miſtaken thro' his own fault. *Thirdly*, If a Man doubt, whether the action injoin'd by Authority be ſinful or no; yet if he think it unlawful to act againſt his private doubt, he cannot do that action without ſin. But then if this Notion of his be falſe (as I ſhall ſhew it is) he ſins alſo in diſobeying, if he be miſtaken thro' his own fault. *Fourthly*, If a Man has been ſo extremely careleſs in learning his duty, that he doubts of the plaineſt matter; in ſuch a caſe a Man is highly accountable for doing that which contradicts the Law of God, tho' he did it purely in obedience to that Authority which God has ſet over him, and purely in compliance with this *true* principle, that *in doubtful caſes we muſt*

muſt be guided by our Superiours. For certainly, if a ſinful thing be commanded, not only he that commands, but he that obeys alſo, muſt anſwer for it, whether he do it *doubtingly*, or with a *perſuaſion* of it's lawfulneſs. Only we muſt remember, *Firſt*, that this is true only in ſuch caſes where the Man might have known his duty, had he not been careleſs; for if a Man be *ignorant* or *doubtful*, becauſe he wanted means or opportunities of informing himſelf, he is not guilty of ſin before God, tho' he break God's Law. *Secondly*, that when this caſe happens, the ſin doth not lie in *obeying* his Superiours *with a doubting conſcience*; but in his doing that, which he wou'd have known to be ſinful, if he had been ſo careful as he ſhou'd have been. For *obeying his Superiours*, whether with a doubt or without one, is no part of the ſin. *Fifthly* I premiſe, that whatever the power of Superiours be for the over-ruling a private doubt; it muſt not deſtroy the *truth*, or take away the uſe of the foregoing *Rules in the Caſe of a double Doubt.* Becauſe the caſe of obeying Superiours, when we doubt of the Lawfulneſs of their commands, is a double Doubt as properly as any other: and therefore, if it be two to one more probable, that the command is unlawful, than that it is lawful, we muſt not obey it by the firſt Rule. But then, tho' the *Authority of Superiours* alone will not turn the Ballance; yet there are uſually ſuch conſiderations of the *greater ſin* and more dreadful conſequences of *diſobeying*, as will outweigh all the probabilities on the other ſide, and make it more reaſonable to *obey*. However, if the command be lawful, a man's falſe opinion that it is ſinful, will not excuſe him; unleſs his miſtake be ſuch as he cou'd not rectify.

Theſe things being premis'd, the plain queſtion is this; whether in the caſe of a pure doubt about the lawfulneſs or unlawfulneſs of an action, where the probabilities are on both ſides pretty equal, and where likewiſe the Man concern'd has done all that he was obliged to do for the ſatisfying himſelf; whether, I ſay, in this caſe the command of a lawful ſuperiour do's not oblige the Man to do that of which he doubteth. I affirm, *it do's oblige him ſo to do*; and therefore,

2. I ſhall ſhew the grounds of my aſſertion. And *Firſt*, Modeſty obliges us to pay as much deference to the judgment of our Superiours, as this comes to. If a doubt ſhou'd ariſe about the lawfulneſs of any civil practice, we ſhou'd without any great difficulty be determin'd by the judgment of a few Learned, Prudent and honeſt Perſons, whom we think better able to judge of the caſe than our ſelves; and do's it not argue much ſelf-conceit and great contempt of our Superiours, to refuſe the ſame reſpect to their judgment, whoſe buſineſs it is to conſult and command for the beſt?

Secondly, Biſhop *Sanderſon* and other *Caſuiſts* agree, that *in all diſputed caſes, he that is in poſſeſſion of the thing contended for, has the advantage of the other, that contends with him, ſuppoſing all other things be equal.* Thus, if I am in poſſeſſion of an Eſtate which another Claims, I cannot juſtly be diſpoſſeſſed, till the other Man's Title appears to be better than mine. Now in our Caſe the Superiour aſſerteth his right and commandeth; the Subject queſtioneth his right, becauſe he doubts whether the command be not ſinful: but ſince the ſuperiour is in poſſeſſion of the Authority to command, the Subject muſt by no means by

by his diſobedience diſpoſſeſs him of that Authority, till he is convinced, that he has greater reaſon to diſobey, than to obey. But this is impoſſible, becauſe the reaſons are ſuppos'd equal on both ſides.

Thirdly, Since in all doubtful Caſes it is a common rule, that the ſafer ſide is to be choſen, 'tis certain, that 'tis ſafer to obey than to diſobey in a doubtful caſe. For there is a plain Law of God that commands us to obey Superiours in all lawful things; and if the command be unlawful, the only hazard we run, is of tranſgreſſing ſome Law of God, which we did not know, and which perhaps we were not bound, or had not means to know: but in a doubtful caſe it is very uncertain, whether the Law of God forbid the thing or no; and if the command be lawful, then we run the hazard of tranſgreſſing a plain Law which we cannot but know, and which is of the greateſt importance to Mankind.

Fourthly, Since in all caſes *we muſt do as we would have others do to us*, let us conſider whether we ſhould not think it unreaſonable for our own inferiours to contradict our Rules upon pretence of *doubting* about their being lawful. If a Parent ſhould command his Son to ſit uncover'd before him, or a Maſter command his Servant to dreſs a Dinner on the Lord's-Day, and either of them ſhould refuſe to do ſo, becauſe he is not ſatisfy'd that the thing is lawful; would not a Parent or a Maſter ſay, *I am to judge what is fit for you to do, and you muſt not think by your fooliſh doubts and ſcruples to controul my commands?* I dare ſay, moſt Men will think this a very juſt reply. And if ſo, then our Superiour alſo is to be obey'd in purely doubtful caſes, notwithſtanding

our doubt. And if we think otherwiſe, it is becauſe our own *Liberty* and *Intereſt* are concern'd, and we are prejudiced in favour of our ſelves.

Fifthly, If Superiours may not determine in merely doubtful caſes, their authority ſignifies nothing, nor can it ſecure the public happineſs. For there is no *indifferent* thing, but ſome Perſon or other will doubt whether it be lawful; and if ſuch a doubt be a juſt reaſon to deny obedience, what will be the conſequence of ſuch a principle, but perpetual confuſions? For inſtance, if a Prince make War, and every ignorant and unexperienced Subject may lawfully withdraw his aſſiſtance, in caſe he doubts whether that War be lawful or no; what a ſad caſe wou'd that Kingdom be in? But theſe conſequences are intolerable; and therefore the principle from whence they flow, muſt needs be thought intolerable alſo.

3. Having thus prov'd my aſſertion, I come now to anſwer the arguments that are brought on the other ſide.

Firſt then they ſay, if the Superiour muſt determine in every doubtful caſe, the inferiour muſt often commit moſt grievous ſins. As for inſtance; if a Man doubt whether *Jehovah* or *Baal* be the true God, and the Ruler command that *Baal* ſhou'd be worſhipp'd, the Man muſt renounce the true God. But this is no argument againſt us; for I have already ſaid, that neither *doubtfulneſs* nor *ignorance* will excuſe an action that is plainly ſinful, tho' it be done in obedience to Authority; and I only aſſert, that the Superiour is to over-rule, when we doubt equally, whether an action be lawful or no, and have done our beſt to ſatisfy our ſelves.

Nay,

Nay, this argument concludes as ſtrongly againſt them, as againſt us. For if a Man doubt, whether *Jehovah* or *Baal* be the true God, and the Ruler command that *Jehovah* only ſhould be worſhipp'd; what advice wou'd they give the *doubting* Man? If they ſay, he muſt obey the Ruler, they give up the cauſe; and if he muſt not obey the Ruler, he muſt worſhip *Baal*, and ſo be guilty of Idolatry.

Secondly They ſay, that God has commanded us to obey our Superiours, not in all things, but in thoſe things only, which are not contrary to his Law. So that when we are uncertain, whether the command be lawful, we are alſo uncertain, whether we are bound to obey; and therefore it is no more our duty to obey, than to diſobey. But I anſwer, that I have already given many weighty reaſons, why we ſhould rather *obey* than *diſobey*, when we equally doubt whether the command be lawful or no.

But *Thirdly*, the principal argument is drawn from St. *Paul*'s words, *He that doubteth is damn'd, if he eat, becauſe he eateth not of faith; for whatſoever is not of faith, is ſin*; Rom. 14. 23. From whence they argue, that if it was a ſin to eat any food, tho' in it ſelf lawful to be eaten, ſo long as they doubted whether it was lawful or no; then by parity of reaſon it muſt be a ſin to do any other action, ſo long as we doubt of the lawfulneſs of it; and if ſo, the Ruler's command will not make it lawful to do it. This is the great argument, and I ſhall give it a full anſwer; only I think it needful to premiſe a general account of the Text it ſelf, before I take of the objection that is drawn from it.

Now St. *Paul* diſcourſes in this Chapter of the caſe

caſe of thoſe *Jewiſh* Chriſtians, who were *perſuaded*, or at leaſt thought it moſt *probable*, that they were bound to keep *Moſes*'s Laws concerning the *obſervation of daies* and *difference of meats*; whereas other Chriſtians, who were better inſtructed, made no ſcruple of eating any kind of food, tho' forbidden by the Law of *Moſes*. If it be ſaid, that the *ſecond verſe* intimates their total abſtinence from *fleſh*, and eating only *herbs*, which *Moſes*'s Law did not oblige them to; I anſwer (with ſome *Fathers*) that they thinking the *Law* ſtill in force, choſe to eat only herbs, that their way of living might paſs rather for a Religious *abſtinence*, than a *legal obſervance*; and ſo the other Chriſtians might not reproach them for keeping the *Law*.

As for the word διακρίνων, which we tranſlate *he that doubteth*, it do's as properly ſignify *he that maketh a difference*; and it is ſo us'd both in *Scripture* and other *Writers*. And therefore the Text is thus to be rendred, *he that maketh a difference* (between meats) *is damn'd or condemn'd if he eat* (any thing which he judgeth to be unclean) *becauſe he eateth not of faith*. This rendring is put in the Margin of our *Bibles*, and is approv'd by moſt *Latin* Expoſitors. The word *faith* alſo in this and the foregoing *verſe*, do's not ſignify, in the large ſence, a belief of the Chriſtian Religion, but only a Man's *aſſent* to the *lawfulneſs* of any particular *action*, that he takes in hand. So that to *have faith* about an action, is to be perſuaded that it is lawful; and to do an action *not of faith*, is to do that which we have reaſon to think is unlawful. And whereas St. *Paul* ſaith, *he is damn'd* if he eat, we muſt obſerve that he do's not mean *damnation* in hell, but the condemnation of his own

own Conſcience; ſo that the ſenſe is this, *He that maketh a difference between meats, and yet eateth, is condemn'd for it in his own Conſcience; becauſe he do's that which he apprehends to be ſinful.*

That Man will ſoon be ſatisfy'd of the truth of this interpretation, who conſiders that St. *Paul* had been perſuading the ſtronger Chriſtians, who thought it lawful to eat any ſort of food, not to give ſcandal to the weak Chriſtians, who thought otherwiſe. And he thus concludes his advice; *Haſt thou faith,* art thou ſatisfy'd that it is lawful to eat any ſort of food? *have it to thy ſelf before God,* enjoy thy perſuaſion; but do not upon every occaſion make uſe of it, leaſt thy weak Brother be embolden'd by thy example to do that, which he thinks to be unlawful. 'Tis true, *happy is he that condemneth not himſelf in that which he alloweth,* happy is he that do's not do what he thinks to be unlawful; *but he that doubteth,* that maketh a difference between meats, *is damn'd or condemn'd* in his Conſcience, *if he eat* what he thinks it is not lawful to eat, *becauſe he eateth not of faith,* and is not ſatisfy'd that it is lawful to eat it; *and whatſoever is not of faith,* whatſoever a Man thinks unlawful, *is ſin* to him that thinks it ſo.

Having thus given an account of the Text it ſelf, I am now to conſider the objection, which is drawn from it, and which, as I have already ſaid, is this; If it was a ſin to eat any food, tho' in it ſelf lawful, ſo long as a Man doubted, whether it was lawful or no; then by parity of reaſon it muſt be a ſin to do any other action, ſo long as we doubt of the lawfulneſs of it. But I anſwer, that this Text is nothing to the purpoſe; for St. *Paul* here ſpeaks not of a *Doubting Conſcience,* but

of

of a *Reſolv'd Conſcience* only. For the Perſons he ſpeaks of, were not wavering in their minds; but were perſuaded that thoſe meats were unclean, becauſe they thought the Law of *Moſes* ſtill in force. This is clear from the 2, 5, and 14 *verſes* of this *Chapter*; *I know* (ſaith St. *Paul*) *and am perſuaded, that there is nothing unclean of it ſelf: but to him that eſteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*

If it be ſaid, that the word *doubteth* is us'd, and that to *doubt* of the unlawfulneſs of an action, is quite another thing, than to be *perſuaded* of it; I anſwer, that the word may as properly be rendred, *he that maketh a difference* between meats, as *he that doubteth.* But tho' the word *doubteth* be retain'd, yet it is undeniably plain that St. *Paul* ſpeaks of a *doubt* ſtrengthen'd with ſo many *probabilities*, that it wanted but very little of a *perſuaſion*; or rather it was a *perſuaſion* with ſome mixture of *doubtfulneſs.* If the Man was not fully perſuaded that it was a ſin to eat, yet he thought it much more probable that it was a ſin, than that it was not. For he cou'd not be *condemn'd* of his own Conſcience for eating, if he did not think his eating to be unlawful, and were not in ſome degree *perſuaded* of it.

Well, but the Apoſtle ſays, *v.* 5. *One man eſteemeth one day above another, another man eſteemeth every day alike: let every man be fully perſuaded in his own mind.* From whence 'tis plain, that a Man muſt be perſuaded that the action is lawful, elſe he doth not act with a ſafe Conſcience. And is not that the very ſame thing that is here ſaid, *He that doubteth is condemn'd if he eat, becauſe he eateth not of faith*, or with a full perſuaſion? The Apoſtle therefore by the former Text directs

directs us to interpret this latter in the proper ſence of *doubting*.

But I anſwer, that St. *Paul* did not oblige them to get *full perſuaſions* in their ſeveral waies, for there was too much of that already amongſt them; and 'twas nothing to his purpoſe to tell them, that if they acted without a full *perſuaſion* of the lawfulneſs of the action, they ſinn'd againſt Conſcience: but his deſign was to perſuade them, quietly to permit each other to enjoy their ſeveral *perſuaſions* in thoſe *little* matters without *cenſuring* one another. So that the words muſt be rendred, *Let every one be fill'd with his own mind*, or *ſatisfy'd with his own perſuaſion*. This indeed differs from our *Engliſh* Tranſlation: but *Grotius* and the *Vulgar Latin*, as well as St. *Chryſoſtom* and *Theodoret* do thus interpret it; and moreover the matter requires it. For otherwiſe the precept is neither *reaſonable* nor *poſſible*; ſince if there appears reaſon of *doubting*, it is in vain to command a man not to *doubt*. Nay it is then as much his duty to *doubt*, as in other caſes to *believe*. Thus then it appears that theſe words (*he that doubteth is damn'd if he eat*) do not overthrow my aſſertion.

But, tho' this is a true and ſubſtantial anſwer to the argument, yet I ſhall give another, which unties the difficulty upon the *Diſſenters* own Principles. Suppoſing therefore (what is utterly falſe) that St. *Paul* ſpeaks of a really *doubting* Perſon, and not of one that is *perſuaded*; and that the Man did ſin in eating thoſe meats, of the lawfulneſs of which he doubted: yet it do's not follow, that a Man ſins in obeying Authority, where he doubts of the lawfulneſs of the command. For there is a vaſt diſparity in the Caſes; ſince the

Man

Man St. *Paul* ſpeaks of, was at Liberty to forbear eating, and ſinn'd in chuſing to run a needleſs hazard of tranſgreſſing God's Law; but when the Superiour commands, a Man is not at Liberty. In the former caſe the Man might forbear without any danger, but in the latter caſe there is greater danger in forbearing than in acting; and therefore he is *Bound* to act in the latter caſe, tho' it might be ſin to act in the former.

But further, the reaſon, why he that *eateth doubtingly*, ſins in ſo doing, is this, *becauſe he eateth not of faith*; and therefore St. *Paul* do's not ſay, it is *alwaies* ſinful to act in a doubtful caſe; becauſe there are ſome *doubtful* caſes, wherein a Man may act with *faith*, notwithſtanding his *doubt*. For he that is ſatisfy'd that he acts according to his duty in the preſent circumſtances, do's act with *faith*; and therefore when a Man is ſatisfy'd that it is more reaſonable, all things conſider'd, to do an action than to forbear it, and that it wou'd be ſinful in his circumſtances to act otherwiſe; that Man do's not ſin in acting, tho' he act with ſome kind of *doubt*; becauſe he acts in *faith*, being ſatisfy'd that he acts according to his duty in his preſent circumſtances. Thus then 'tis plain, that to obey authority in a *purely doubtful* caſe is not ſinful; becauſe a Man may ſoon be ſatisfy'd, that it is not only more reaſonable, but his duty ſo to do.

If it be ſaid, that a Man cannot have *faith*, that is, be ſatisfy'd about an action, and yet *doubt* of it at the ſame time; I anſwer, that the caſe often happens. A Man has often very great doubts about the lawfulneſs of an action in general, and yet may be ſatisfy'd, that conſidering the circumſtances he is in, it may be lawfully done. All doubting

ing is not contrary to *faith*. It is ſufficient if the *doubts* be over-ballanc'd. Tho' a Man's *doubts* be hard and troubleſome, yet if he is *perſuaded*, that all things conſider'd, it is more adviſable to do the action, than to forbear it; he has *faith* enough to act with a ſafe Conſcience. Becauſe he acts according to his beſt judgment, and more than this a Man cannot do.

IV. I am now to ſpeak in the *Fourth* and laſt place of the *authority* of a *doubting Conſcience*, and to inquire, whether at all, or how far a Man is obliged by it. I ſay therefore in general, that a *doubting Conſcience* do's not oblige at all. For a *doubting Conſcience* is the *ſuſpence of a Man's judgment* about a particular action; he *doubts* whether he be bound to do it or forbear it. Now to ſuppoſe that a Man thinks himſelf *bound in Conſcience*, while he is diſputing whether he is *bound* or no, is to ſuppoſe a contradiction. A Man cannot be *bound in Conſcience* to do or forbear any action, but as he thinks that God's Law has commanded or forbidden it; and therefore he that is doubtful, whether it be commanded or forbidden, cannot be *obliged in Conſcience* either way. There is no particular Law of God, which determines our actions one way or other in the caſe of a *doubt*; and the general Laws, whether *natural* or *reveal'd*, can oblige us to no more, than to endeavour to underſtand our duty as well as we can; and when we are at a loſs, to act as reaſonably as we can. He that do's thus, acts with a *ſafe Conſcience*, tho' he act *doubtfully*.

Having thus largely diſcuſs'd the caſe of a *doubting Conſcience*, I think it will not be amiſs to apply what has been ſaid to the Caſe of our preſent *Diſſenters*. There are ſeveral Perſons, that are un-

ſatisfy'd about the lawfulneſs of our Communion; ſome upon the account of *Ceremonies*, others of other things. None of them can ſay, that theſe things are *unlawful*; for that is the caſe of a *reſolv'd Conſcience*, with which we have nothing here to do: but they are uncertain, whether they be lawful or no; and ſo long as they thus *doubt*, they dare not join in our worſhip, fearing they ſhou'd ſin againſt God in ſo doing. Of theſe Perſons ſome have a *ſingle* doubt, that is, they doubt whether they may lawfully join with us, but they are ſatisfy'd they may lawfully ſeparate from us: others have a *double* doubt, that is, they doubt whether they may lawfully join with us, and they doubt whether they may lawfully ſeparate from us.

As to the *Firſt* of theſe ſorts, tho' in a *ſingle* doubt it is more ſafe to chuſe that ſide on which a Man has no doubt, than that on which he doubts; yet this Rule holds only in ſuch caſes, where a Man may *forbear* the action without danger of ſinning, tho' he cannot *do* it without danger of ſinning. But in our caſe 'tis evident, that as there may be ſinning in *Conforming*, ſo there is certainly danger of ſinning in *not Conforming*. Nor is it more ſafe to ſeparate in caſe of a *ſingle* doubt, than of a *double* one. For the Man who is ſatisfy'd in his mind, that he may lawfully cut himſelf off from the Communion of the Church, and live in conſtant diſobedience to his Superiours (which things are directly contrary to God's Laws) muſt needs be groſly and criminally ignorant of his duty; and therefore his being ſatisfy'd about ſuch ſins will not excuſe him; becauſe he was able, and it was his duty to know better.

Nay

Nay further, tho' God had left it indifferent, whether we keep the Unity of the Church and obey our Superiours or no; tho' the caſe were really that of a *ſingle* doubt; tho' there was no danger in forbearing theſe things, but the only danger was in doing them; yet I ſay, it is more reaſonable to *Conform* than to *Separate* notwithſtanding. For tho' in a *ſingle* doubt a Man is to chuſe that ſide on which he has no doubt, rather than that on which he doubts; yet this Rule (as I ſaid before) do's not hold, unleſs all other conſiderations be equal. And therefore if a great good may be obtain'd, or a great evil avoided by acting on the doubtful ſide, that conſideration ought to turn the Ballance, and over-rule the doubt; as I ſhew'd in the Caſe of going to Law. And certainly, if weighty conſiderations ought to over-ballance a *ſingle* doubt in any caſe; then the conſiderations of the *Peace* of the Kingdom, the *Security* of Religion, and thoſe many *Public* and *Private Miſchiefs* that attend Separation, ought to prevail in this of ours, and oblige Men to *Conform*. And I wiſh this were well conſider'd by our *doubting Diſſenters*.

As to the *Second* ſort, who doubt both of the lawfulneſs of *Conforming*, and alſo of the lawfulneſs of ſeparating from us; I ſay *Firſt*, if the *probabilities* appear pretty equal on both ſides, then it is their duty to obey Authority. as I prov'd in the *Third* general Head of this Diſcourſe. *Secondly*, if they think it more probable that they ought not to *Conform*, than that they ought; then, tho' the Authority of Superiours alone have not weight enough to turn the Ballance, yet the conſideration of the great ſin and the more dreadful conſequences of ſeparation are ſufficient, and

ought to oblige them to *Conform*, as appears from the *Third* prop. about a *double* doubt, p. 256, 257.

Now let any indifferent Man judge between us and our *Diſſenters*. 'Tis plain, that the things they doubt of, are not directly forbidden by God. And if they are forbidden by conſequences, thoſe conſequences are ſo obſcure, that tho' ſuch uſages have ever been in the Chriſtian Church, yet they were never condemn'd as ſinful till our daies. And even now theſe conſequences are not diſcover'd by our ſuperiours; no, not by as great and good Divines of all perſuaſions, as any in the World. Nay the far greater number, and thoſe as Pious and Able as any, do plainly own our injunctions to be innocent at leaſt, if not Apoſtolical. So that if they are all miſtaken, it can at moſt be but a ſin of ignorance in an ordinary perſon, where ſo many of the beſt guides are miſtaken, if he ſhou'd tranſgreſs. But now on the other hand, if our Governours be in the right, and our Communion lawful; then how great a ſin are they guilty of, in breaking the Laws of *Church-Unity*, which are as plain as any in the *Bible*; and that in ſuch inſtances, where the whole Catholic Church of Old, and the greateſt and beſt part of the preſent Church, are of a different perſuaſion from them? The conſequences alſo of their ſeparation are moſt dreadful; for by it they deprive themſelves of the ordinary means of Salvation, and keep up thoſe diſcords and animoſities in the Church, which have torn the bowels of it, and cauſed *Atheiſm* and *Prophaneſs* to overſpread it; they affront their Governours, give ſcandal to all peaceable perſons, and offer a very fair pretence to factious Men to practiſe againſt the beſt of Goverments. So they take the Moſt effectual

fectual courſe to ruin the beſt Church in the World, and with it the reform'd Religion in this Kingdom. And now let any Man judge, whether any doubt about the lawfulneſs of our Communion, and all the probabilities of the doubt, have weight enough to Ballance againſt ſuch a ſin and ſuch conſequences. Certainly an unconcern'd Perſon will pronounce, that in ſuch a caſe a Man is bound to Conform, rather than to Separate; and that is all I contend for.

CHAP. XIII.

The pretence of a Scrupulous Conſcience Anſwer'd.

I Proceed now to the pretence of a *Scrupulous Conſcience*; in Treating of which I ſhall, 1. *Shew what I mean by it.* 2. *Obſerve ſome few things concerning it.* 3. *Offer ſome plain Rules and Means, by which we may beſt get rid of it.*

Firſt then, Conſcience is a Man's judgment concerning the Goodneſs or Evil of his Actions; and a *Scrupulous Conſcience* is a *Scrupulous* judgment concerning things in their own nature indifferent; and conſiſts either, 1. in ſtrictly tying up our ſelves to ſome things, which God has no where commanded; as the *Phariſees* made great Conſcience of waſhing before meat, *&c.* and obſerv'd ſuch uſages as Religiouſly, as the moſt indiſputable commands of God: or, 2. in a conſcientious abſtaining from ſome things, which are no waies unlawful; doubting and fearing where no fear is; thinking that God is as much offended by our

eating ſome kind of Meats, or wearing ſome Garments, as by Adultery or Murder; and being more preciſe about little matters, than other Good Chriſtians are, or our ſelves ought to be.

Secondly, Concerning this *Scrupulous Conſcience* we may obſerve, 1. that it is a ſickly temper of Mind, and a ſtate of Infirmity, ariſing from a Want of right underſtanding our Religion, from Timerouſneſs, Melancholy, and Prejudice. Now this is no more a Vertue or commendable Quality in us, than 'tis to be ſickly and often indiſpos'd. A good Conſcience is firm and ſteady, well ſetled and reſolv'd: but ſuch needleſs ſcruples are at the beſt a ſign of an ungovern'd fancy and a weak judgment; juſt as the Niceneſs and Squeamiſhneſs of a Man's ſtomach, that diſtaſts Wholſom Food, is a ſymptom of an unſound and unhealthy Body. 2. 'Tis often a ſign of Hypocriſy; as 'twas in the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, who ſtrain'd at a Gnat and ſwallow'd a Camel, and hoped to make amends for their groſs Tranſgreſſions in other caſes of far greater Weight and Moment, by their curioſity about ſome external Obſervances. They therefore who are ſo Scrupulous about little indifferent matters, ought to approve their Honeſty and Sincerity by the moſt accurate diligence in the practice of all other Duties of Religion, which are plainly and undoubtedly ſuch. They who pretend to ſuch a tender Conſcience above other Men, muſt know, that the World will watch them as to the fairneſs and juſtice of their *Dealings*, the calmneſs of their Tempers, their Behaviour in their ſeveral Relations, their Modeſty, Humility, Charity, Peaceableneſs, and the like. If in all theſe things they keep the ſame Tenor, uſe the ſame caution and circumſpection, and be uniformly conſcientious;

ſcientious; then it muſt be acknowledg'd, that it is only Weakneſs or Ignorance that raiſeth their Scruples, and not any vicious Principle; and the condition of thoſe who are under the power of ſuch Scruples, is much to be commiſerated. But when I ſee a Man ſcrupling praying by a Book or Form, and yet living without any ſenſe of God, or fear of him; afraid of a Ceremony in God's Worſhip, and not afraid of a plain damnable Sin, of Coveteouſneſs, raſh cenſuring his Brethren, of Hatred and Strife, Faction and Schiſm, and diſobedience to Superiours; when I ſee one that out of Conſcience refuſeth to kneel at the Sacrament, and yet dares totally neglect the Communion; who takes great care not to give offence to his weak Brother, but can freely ſpeak evil of Dignities, and deſpiſe his lawful Governours: it is not then uncharitable to ſay, That it is not a dread of diſpleaſing God, but ſome other End or Intereſt that acts and moves him; and that in pleading the Tenderneſs of his Conſcience he is no other than a downright Hypocrite. 3. 'Tis exceſſively troubleſome and vexatious. It robs a Man of that Peace and Satisfaction, which he might otherwiſe find in Religion, and makes his Condition continually uneaſy and reſtleſs. 4. It's ſcruples are infinite and endleſs; for there is hardly any thing to be done, but ſome ſmall exceptions may be ſtarted againſt it. Scrupulous Men go on from one Thing to another, till at Length they Scruple every thing. This is notorious amongſt us; for thoſe who have taken Offence at ſome things in our Church, and have thereupon ſeparated from us, and aſſociated themſelves with a purer Congregation, have ſoon diſlik'd ſomething amongſt them alſo; and then

they wou'd reform themſelves farther, and after that refine themſelves more ſtill, till at laſt they have ſunk down either into *Quakeriſm*, *Popery*, or *Atheiſm*. 5. This Needleſs ſcrupling has done unſpeakable miſchiefs to the Church of Chriſt, eſpecially to the Reform'd Church of *England*. In the great and neceſſary Truths of Religion we all profeſs to be agreed. We all worſhip the ſame God, believe in the ſame Lord and Saviour, have the ſame Baptiſm, the ſame Faith, the ſame Hope, the ſame common Intereſt: our Sacraments, as to the main, are rightly adminiſtred according to our Saviour's Inſtitution; our Churches are acknowledg'd to be true Churches of Jeſus Chriſt; but there are ſome Conſtitutions which chiefly reſpect outward Order, and the decent Performance of Divine Worſhip, againſt which Men have receiv'd ſtrange Prejudices, on the account of them have rais'd a mighty noiſe and clamour againſt the Church, and have openly ſeparated from her Communion; as if by renouncing of *Popery* we had only exchanged one idolatrous Service for another. About theſe Skirts and Borders, the dreſs and circumſtances of Religion, has been all our quarrelling and contention; and theſe Differences have proceeded to ſuch an height, as to beget immortal Feuds and Animoſities, to break and crumble us into little Parties and Factions; whereby mutual Edification is hinder'd, our common Religion ſuffers Reproach, the Enemies of it are ſtrengthen'd and encouraged, public Peace endanger'd, and brotherly Love, the Badge of Chriſt's Diſciples, quite loſt amongſt us; and the continuance of theſe miſerable Diſtractions amongſt us upon ſuch frivolous Accounts, is a matter of ſad conſideration, and forebodes great Evils

vils in Church and State. I doubt not to ſay, that the Devil has fought more ſucceſsfully againſt Religion under the Mask of a zealous Reformer, than under any other diſguiſe whatever.

Thirdly, I ſhall offer ſome plain Rules and Means, by which we may beſt get rid of a *Scrupulous Conſcience.*

1. We ſhou'd Endeavour to have the moſt Honourable thoughts of God; for accordingly as we Conceive of His Nature, ſo ſhall we judge what Things are moſt Pleaſing or moſt Offenſive to Him. Now conſider, I pray; Do's not God principally Regard the Frame of our Minds in Prayer? or will He refuſe to hear us, becauſe He diſlikes the Garment of the Miniſter? Do's God regard any particular Geſtures or Habits, which are neither Diſhonourable to Him, nor Unſutable to the Nature of the Religious performance, ſo far, as that the acceptance of our Worſhip ſhou'd depend upon ſuch Circumſtances? To ſurmiſe any ſuch Thing is ſurely to Diſhonour God, as if he were a low, poor, humourſom Being; like a Father that ſhou'd diſinherit his Dutiful Child, only becauſe he did not like his Complexion, or the Colour of his Hair. The Wiſer and Greater any Perſon is, to whom we addreſs our ſelves, the leſs he will ſtand upon little Punctilioes.

Mean Thoughts of God are the true ground of all Superſtition, when we think to court and pleaſe him by making great Conſcience about little things; and ſo it has been truly obſerv'd, that there is far more Superſtition in conſcientious abſtaining from that which God has no where forbidden, than there is in doing that which God has not commanded. A Man may certainly do what God has not commanded, and yet never think to

flatter God by it, nor place any Religion in it: but he may do it only out of obedience to his Superiours, for outward Order and Decency, for which end our Ceremonies are appointed; and ſo there is no Superſtition in them. But now a Man cannot out of Conſcience refuſe to do what God has not forbidden, and is by lawful Authority requir'd of him; but he muſt think to pleaſe God by ſuch abſtaining: and in this conceit of pleaſing or humouring God by indifferent things, conſiſts the true Spirit of Superſtition.

2. We ſhou'd lay out our Great Care and Zeal about the Neceſſary and Eſſential Duties of Religion; and this will make us leſs Concern'd about Things of an Idifferent and Inferiour Nature. St. *Paul* ſaies; *Rom.* 14. 17. *The Kingdom of God is not Meat nor Drink, but Righteouſneſs, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* What needs all this ſtir and buſtle? this cenſuring, diſputing and dividing, about Standing or Kneeling? Theſe are not the great matters of our Faith; they are not worth ſo much Noiſe and Contention. The great ſtreſs and weight in our Religion is laid upon the Duties of a Righteous and Holy Life, and a Peaceable Spirit and Converſation; *For*, ſaies St. *Paul*, *ver.* 18. *he that in theſe things ſerveth Chriſt, is acceptable to God and approv'd of men.* He that minds thoſe Things moſt, on which the Efficacy of his Prayers for Chriſt's ſake do's Depend, will not Need new Phraſes every time to raiſe his Affections: and the more a Man is concern'd about the Neceſſary Preparation for the Sacrament, the leſs afraid will he be of offending God by Kneeling at it. For he will find, that True Religion conſiſts in the Conſtant Practice of Holineſs, Righteouſneſs and Charity; which make

a Man really Better, and more Like to God.

3. If Men were but really Willing to receive ſatisfaction, this alone wou'd half conquer their Scruples: but when they are fond of them, and nouriſh them, and will neither hear nor read what is to be ſaid on the other ſide; there can be but Little Hopes of recovering them to a Right Apprehenſion of things. Wou'd they come once to diſtruſt their own Judgments, to ſuppoſe that they may perhaps be all this while miſtaken; wou'd they calmly and patiently hear, faithfully and impartially conſider, what is ſaid or written againſt them; as eagerly ſeek for ſatisfaction, as Men do for the cure of any Diſeaſe they are ſubject unto; wou'd they, I ſay, thus diligently uſe all fit means and helps for the removal of their Scruples, before they troubled the Church with them; it wou'd not prove ſo very difficult a Task to convince and ſettle ſuch teachable Minds. When they have any Fear or Suſpicion about their worldly concerns, they preſently repair to thoſe who are beſt skill'd, and moſt able to reſolve them; and in their judgment and determination they commonly acquieſce and ſatisfy themſelves. Has any Man a Scruple about his Eſtate, whether it be firmly ſetled, or he has a true legal Title to it? The way he takes for ſatisfaction is to adviſe with Lawyers, the moſt eminent for Knowledge and Honeſty in their Profeſſion. If they agree in the ſame Opinion, this is the greateſt aſſurance he can have, that it is right and ſafe. Thus is it with one that doubts whether ſuch a cuſtom or practice be for his Health; the opinion of known and experienc'd Phyſicians is the only proper means to determine him in ſuch a Caſe. The reaſon is the

ſame

ſame here. When any private Chriſtian is troubled and perplex'd with Fears and Scruples, that concern his Duty or the Worſhip of God; he ought in the firſt place to have recourſe to the public Guides and Miniſters of Religion, who are appointed by God, and are beſt fitted to direct and conduct him; I ſay, to come to them, not only to diſpute with them, and pertly to oppoſe them; but with modeſty to propound their doubts, and meekly to receive Inſtruction, humbly begging of God to open their Underſtandings, that they may ſee and embrace the truth, taking great care that no evil affection, love of a Party, or carnal Intereſt influence or byaſs their Judgments.

I do not by this deſire Men to pin their Faith upon the Prieſt's Sleeve; but only diligently to Attend to their Reaſons and Arguments, and to give ſome due Regard to their Authority. For 'tis not ſo Abſurd, as ſome may Imagine, for the Common People to take upon Truſt from their Lawful Teachers, what they are not Competent Judges of themſelves. But the difficulty is, how a private Chriſtian ſhall govern himſelf, when the very Miniſters of Religion diſagree. By what Rule ſhall he chuſe his Guide? I anſwer, 1. If a Man be tolerably able to Judge for himſelf; let him impartially hear both ſides, and think it no Shame to Change his Mind, when he ſees good Reaſon for it. Cou'd we thus prevail with the People diligently to examine the Merits of the cauſe, our Church wou'd every day gain more Ground amongſt all wiſe Men. For we care not how much Knowledge and Underſtanding our People have, ſo they be but humble and modeſt with it: nor do we deſire Men to become our Proſe-

lytes

lytes any further, than we give them good *Scripture* and Reaſon for it. 2. As for thoſe who are not capable of Judging, they had better Depend on thoſe Miniſters, who are Regularly and by the Laws of the Land ſet over them; than on any other Teachers, that they can chuſe for themſelves.

I ſpeak now of theſe preſent Controverſies about Forms and Ceremonies, which are above the ſphere of Common People; not of ſuch things as Concern the Salvation of all Men, which are plain and evident to the Meaneſt Capacities. When therefore in ſuch Caſes, about which we cannot eaſily ſatisfy our ſelves, we follow the Advice of the Authoriz'd Guides; if they chance to Miſlead us, we have ſomething to ſay for our ſelves; our error is more *Excuſable*, as being occaſion'd by thoſe, whoſe Judgment God commands us to reſpect: but when we chuſe Inſtructors according to our own Fancies, if we then prove to be in the wrong, and are betray'd into ſin; we may Thank our own Wantonneſs for it, and are more ſeverely Accountable for ſuch miſtakes. Thus if a Sick Perſon ſhou'd miſcarry under a Licens'd Phyſician; he has this contentment, that he us'd the wiſeſt means for Recovery: but if he will hearken only to *Quacks*, and then grow worſe and worſe; he muſt charge his own Folly as the Cauſe of his Ruin.

4. We ſhou'd throughly conſider, what is the true Notion of *Lawful*; and how it differs from what is *Neceſſary*, and from what is *Sinful*. That is neceſſary, or our Duty, which God has expreſly commanded; that is ſinful which God has forbidden; that is lawful which God has not by any Law obliging us, either commanded or forbidden.

For

For *Where there is no Law*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *there is no Tranſgreſſion*, Rom. 4. 15. There can be no Tranſgreſſion, but either omitting what the Law commands, or doing what the Law forbids. For inſtance, If any Man can ſhew where Kneeling at the Sacrament is forbidden in *Scripture*, and Sitting is requir'd; where Praying by a Form is forbidden, and *Extempore* Prayers are injoin'd; then indeed the Diſpute wou'd ſoon be at an end: but if neither the one nor other can be found, as moſt certainly they cannot, then Kneeling at the Sacrament, and reading Prayers out of a Book, muſt be reckon'd amongſt things lawful. And then there is no need of ſcrupling them, becauſe they may be done without Sin: Nay, where they are requir'd by our Superiours, it is our Duty to ſubmit to them, becauſe it is our Duty to obey them in all lawful things. This way of arguing is very plain and convincing, and cannot be evaded, but by giving another notion of *lawful*. And therefore it is commonly ſaid, that nothing is lawful, eſpecially in the Worſhip of God, which God himſelf has not preſcrib'd and appointed, or that has been abus'd to evil Purpoſes: but having fully confuted theſe two Miſtakes in the *Second* and *Eighth* Chapters, I ſhall paſs them over here.

5. I deſire thoſe who Scruple to comply with our Church, to conſider that there never was, nor ever will be, any public Conſtitution, that will be every way unexceptionable. The beſt Policy, whether Civil or Eccleſiaſtical, that can be eſtabliſh'd, will have ſome flaws and defects, which muſt be born and tolerated. Some Inconveniences will in proceſs of time ariſe, that never cou'd be foreſeen or provided againſt; and to make alteration upon every emergent difficulty,

may

may be often of worſe conſequence, than the evil we pretend to cure by it. Let the Rules and Modes of Goverment, Diſcipline, Public Worſhip, be moſt exact and blameleſs; yet there will be faults in Governours and Miniſters as long as they are but Men. We muſt not expect in this World a Church without ſpot or wrinkle, that conſiſts only of *Saints*, in which nothing can be found amiſs; eſpecially by thoſe who lie at the catch, and wait for an advantage againſt it. Men muſt be willing, if ever they wou'd promote Peace and Unity, to put candid Conſtructions and Favourable Interpretations upon Things; and not ſtrain them on purpoſe, that they may raiſe more conſiderable Objections againſt them.

6. If theſe and the like Conſiderations will not conquer a Man's Scruples; then let him lay them aſide, and act againſt them. But here I eaſily imagine ſome ready preſently to ask me, Do you perſuade us to Conform to the Orders of the Church, tho' we are not ſatisfy'd in our Minds concerning them? I anſwer, That I think this is the *beſt*. Advice that can be given to ſuch Scrupulous Perſons. It wou'd be an endleſs thing, and Communion with any Church wou'd be altogether unpracticable, if every private *Chriſtian* was obliged to ſuſpend joining himſelf to it, till he was perfectly ſatisfy'd about the reaſonableneſs and expediency of all that was requir'd, or was in uſe in that Church. For indeed; private Perſons are by no means proper Judges of what is fit and convenient in the Adminiſtration of Church-Goverment, Diſcipline, or public Worſhip, any more than they are of matters of State, or the Reaſonableneſs of all Civil Laws. Things of a Public Nature belong to Superiours; and if they

they Appoint what is Indecent or Inconvenient, they only are Accountable for it: but 'tis not the Fault of Inferiours, who join with ſuch Worſhip, or yeild to ſuch Injunctions (not plainly ſinful) for the ſake of Peace and Order.

I do not by this encourage Men to venture blindfold on Sin, or to neglect any reaſonable care of their Actions; but if People raiſe all the Difficulties and objections they can ſtart, before they proceed to a Reſolution about things that have no manifeſt Impiety in them, nor are plainly, nor by any eaſy conſequence, contrary to the reveal'd Will of God; this cannot but occaſion infinite Perplexity and Trouble to Mens minds, and there are but few things they ſhall be able to do with a ſafe and quiet Conſcience. Before we ſeparate from a Church, or refuſe to comply with it's Orders, we ought to be fully ſatisfy'd and perſuaded, that what is requir'd, is forbidden by God; becauſe by leaving the Communion of any Church, we paſs Sentence upon it and condemn it, which ought not to be done upon light and doubtful Cauſes. But there is not the ſame neceſſity, that we ſhou'd be thus fully ſatisfy'd about our Conformity to all things preſcrib'd by the Church. We may preſume them to be innocent, unleſs they plainly appear to us otherwiſe. If any one think, that this Principle will introduce *Popery*, and make People without any examination ſubmit to every Thing, which their Superiours pleaſe to impoſe upon them; let him only Conſider, that there are many things in *Popery*, which God has manifeſtly forbidden, which render our Separation from it *neceſſary:* whereas ours are at the worſt only doubtful, or rather not ſo Good as might be Devis'd; and this

this ſurely makes a wide Difference in the Caſe.

But do's not St. *Paul* ſay, *Rom.* 14. 14. *I know and am perſuaded by the Lord Jeſus, that there is nothing Unclean of it ſelf; but to him that eſteemeth any thing Unclean, it is unclean?* Do's he not ſay, *He that doubteth, is damn'd if he eat,* v. 23. and that *whatſoever is not of faith, is ſin?* I anſwer, Yes. But then, when I ſpeak of a *Scrupulous Conſcience*, I ſuppoſe the Perſon tolerably well perſuaded of the lawfulneſs of what is to be done: but yet he has ſome little Exceptions againſt it; he do's not think it *beſt* and *fitteſt* all things conſider'd. This is properly a Scruple; and is certainly the caſe of all thoſe, who do ſometimes join in our Worſhip; which they cou'd not do, did they judge it abſolutely ſinful. So that, tho' it ſhou'd be granted, that a Man cannot innocently do that, of which his Conſcience doubts whether it be Lawful or no, which caſe I have diſcours'd of in the foregoing *Chapter*: yet a Man may, and in ſome caſes is bound to do that, which is not Unlawful, tho' upon ſome other accounts he *Scruples* the doing of it. Now, if we have no very Weighty Reaſon for the doing of them; then it may be the ſafeſt way to forbear all ſuch things, as we ſcruple at. Of ſuch Caſes the Apoſtle ſpeaks in the fore-mentioned places of eating or not eating ſome Meats; neither of them was requir'd by Law. Eating was no Inſtance of Duty, nor was it any waies forbid Chriſtians. Where to do or not to do is perfectly at our own choice, it is beſt for a Man to forbear doing that which he has ſome ſuſpicion of, tho' he be not ſure that it is ſinful. As ſuppoſe a Man have Scruples in his Mind about playing at Cards and Dice, or going to ſee Stage-plays, or putting out his Money to

Uſury; becauſe there is no great Reaſon or Neceſſity for any of theſe things, and to be ſure they may be innocently forborn, without any detriment to our ſelves or others; tho' we do not judge them abſolutely ſinful, yet it is ſafeſt for him who cannot ſatisfy himſelf concerning the Goodneſs and Fitneſs of them, wholly to deny himſelf the uſe of them. But in theſe two caſes *it is moſt for the quiet of our Conſciences, to act againſt, or notwithſtanding our Fears and Scruples, when either our Superiours, to whom we owe Obedience, have interpos'd their Commands, or when by it we prevent ſome great Evil or Miſchief.*

1. All Fears and Scruples only about the *Conveniency* and *Expediency* of Things, ought to be deſpis'd, when they come in Competition with the Duty of Obedience. Wou'd Men but think themſelves in Conſcience bound to pay the ſame Duty and Reſpect to the Judgment and Authority of Magiſtrates and Governours, whether in Church or State, as they do expect their Servants and Children ſhou'd to themſelves; they wou'd ſoon ſee the reaſonableneſs of ſuch Submiſſions. For all Goverment and Subjection wou'd be very precarious and arbitrary, if every one that did not approve of a Law, or was not fully ſatisfy'd about the reaſonableneſs of it, was thereby excepted from all Obligations to obey it. This is to give the Supreme Authority to the moſt humourſome or perverſe ſort of Chriſtians; for, according to this Principle, no public Laws and Conſtitutions can be valid and binding, unleſs every ſcrupulous, tho' a very ignorant Conſcience, conſent to them.

2. We are not to mind or ſtand upon our Scruples, when they probably occaſion a great Evil,

Evil, or general Miſchief. They are not fit to be put in the ballance with the Peace of the Church and Unity of Chriſtians. Suppoſe for once, that our public way of Worſhip is not the beſt that can be devis'd; that many things might be amended in our *Liturgy*; that we cou'd invent a more agreeable Eſtabliſhment than this preſent is; (which yet no Man in the World can ever tell, for we cannot know all the Inconveniencies of any alteration, till it comes to be try'd) yet granting all this, it cannot be thought ſo intolerable an Evil, as contempt of God's Solemn Worſhip, dividing into Sects and Parties, living in Debate, Contention, and Separation from one another. If there be ſome Rites and Cuſtoms amongſt us not wiſely choſen or determin'd, ſome Ceremonies againſt which juſt Exceptions may be made; yet to forſake the Communion of ſuch a true Church of Jeſus Chriſt, and ſet up a diſtinct Altar in oppoſition to it, to combine and aſſociate into ſeparate Congregations, is (as it is ſomewhere expreſs'd) *like knocking a Man on the Head, becauſe his Teeth are rotten, or his Nails too long.* How much more agreeable is it to the Chriſtian Temper, to be willing to ſacrifice all Doubts and Scruples to the Intereſts of public Order and Divine Charity? For better ſurely it is to ſerve God in a defective manner, to bear with many Diſorders and Faults; than to break the Bond of Peace and Brotherly Communion.

CHAP. XIV.

The pretence of Scandal, or giving Offence to Weak Brethren, Anſwer'd.

BUT there are ſome, who tell us, that they are indeed themſelves ſufficiently perſuaded of the lawfulneſs of all that is injoin'd by the Church of *England*; but then there are many other godly, but weaker Chriſtians of another perſuaſion, with whom they have long been join'd. And ſhou'd they now totally forſake them and Conform; they ſhou'd thereby give great offence to all thoſe tender Conſciences, which are not thus convinc'd of the lawfulneſs of holding Communion with our Church. Which ſin, ſay they, is ſo very great, that our Saviour tells us, *Matth.* 18. 6. *Whoſoever ſhall offend one of theſe little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-ſtone were hang'd about his neck, and that he were drown'd in the depth of the ſea:* and in St. *Paul*'s account 'tis no leſs than ſpiritual murther, *a deſtroying him for whom Chriſt dy'd,* Rom. 14. 15.

Theſe Perſons I deſign to anſwer in this *Chapter,* by ſhewing that *No private Chriſtian (as the caſe now ſtands amongſt us) is obliged to abſent himſelf from his Pariſh-Church for fear of Offending or Scandalizing his Weak Brethren.* And this I ſhall do by inquiring, 1. *What is the true Notion of a Weak Brother.* 2. *What it is to Offend ſuch an one.* 3. *How far, and in what inſtances we are bound to conſider the Weakneſs of our Brother.*

I. Then, a *Weak Brother* or *weak in Faith* in *Scripture*

Scripture language denotes one newly converted to Chriſtianity; and ſo neither throughly inſtructed in the Principles, nor well ſetled in the practice of it; the ſame whom our Saviour calls a *little one*, and the *Apoſtle* a *babe in Chriſt*, 1 Cor. 3. 1. Converſion to Chriſtianity is call'd our New-birth; and the Converts were for a while reckon'd as in an infant State: and accordingly were to be moſt gently us'd, till by degrees, by the improvement of their knowledge, they came to be *of full Age*, Heb. 5. 14. They were at firſt to be fed with Milk, to be taught the eaſieſt and plaineſt Doctrines, and great Prudence and Caution was to be us'd toward them; leſt they ſhou'd ſuddenly fly back and repent of their change. For they having been *Jews* and *Gentiles*, retain'd ſtill a great Love for many of their Old Cuſtoms and Opinions; they had mighty and inveterate prejudices to overcome; the Old Man was by degrees to be put off: and therefore they were at firſt treated with all the tenderneſs and condeſcenſion imaginable. The ſtronger and wiſer Chriſtians wou'd not ſtand rigidly on any little Matters, but Tolerate many things, which were neceſſary afterwards to be done away; hoping that in time they might be brought off thoſe miſtakes they now labour'd under. Hence I obſerve,

1. That the Rules, which are laid down in *Scripture* concerning *Weak Brethren*, are not ſtanding Laws equally obliging all Chriſtians in all Ages: but were ſuted to the Infant-ſtate of the Church, till Chriſtianity had gotten firm footing in the World. The Apoſtle's deſign in all his complyances, was to win many to Chriſt; 1 *Cor.* 9. 19. Now to do as St. *Paul* did, wou'd alwaies be the Duty and Wiſdom of one in his circumſtan-

ces, who was to ſpread Chriſtianity amongſt Heathens and Infidels: but his Directions and Practice do no more agree with our Times, wherein Chriſtianity is the National Religion; than the ſame Cloaths which we did wear in our Infancy, wou'd ſerve us now at our full Age. We ought indeed to remove every Straw out of Childrens way, leſt they ſtumble and fall: but 'tis ridiculous to uſe the ſame care towards grown Men. There is not now amongſt us any ſuch competition between Two Religions: but every one learns Chriſtianity as he do's his Mother-Tongue. St. *Paul* wou'd not take that Reward that was due to him for Preaching the Goſpel, but himſelf labour'd hard night and day, becauſe he wou'd not be chargeable to his Converts, 1 *Theſſ.* 2. 9. and this he did for the furtherance of the Goſpel, that all might ſee he did not ſerve his own Belly: but ſurely our *Diſſenters* do not think themſelves obliged by this Example, in places where public maintenance is ſetled on Miniſters by Law, to refuſe to take it, and earn their own Bread by ſome manual Occupation; tho' thereby they avoid giving Offence to *Quakers*, and thoſe who call them Hirelings, and ſay they propheſy only for filthy lucre. In ſhort, there are no ſuch *Weak* Perſons now amongſt us, as thoſe were for whom the Apoſtle provides; or as thoſe *little ones* were, for whom our Saviour was ſo much concern'd.

2. The *Diſſenters*, according to their weak opinion of themſelves, are of all Men the fartheſt off from being *Weak Chriſtians* in any ſenſe. They who take upon themſelves to be Teachers of others, wiſer and better than their Neighbours, the only ſober and godly Party, and are too apt

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to deſpiſe all other Chriſtians as ignorant or profane; with what colour of Reaſon can they plead for any favour to be ſhewn, or Regard to be had to them in complyance with their *weakneſs?* Tho' they love to argue againſt us from the Example of St. *Paul's* condeſcenſion to the ignorant *Jews* or *Gentiles*; yet it is apparent that they do not in other Caſes willingly liken themſelves to thoſe *weak Believers*, or *Babes in Chriſt*. They have really better thoughts of themſelves, and wou'd be Leaders and Maſters in *Iſrael*, and preſcribe to their Governours, and give Laws to all others, and prefer their own private Opinion (which they call their *Conſcience*) before the Judgment of the wiſeſt Men, or the Determinations of their lawful Superiours. And if in all Inſtances we ſhou'd deal with them as *weak* Perſons, turn them back to their *Primmer*, adviſe them to learn their *Catechiſm*; they wou'd think themſelves highly wrong'd and injur'd. But the truth is, they ordinarily look upon their Oppoſition to the Orders of our Church, as the Effect of an higher Illumination, a greater Knowledge than others have attain'd unto. They rather count us the *weak* Chriſtians, if ſome of them will allow us ſo much; for otherwiſe, if they do not take us for the weaker and worſe Chriſtians, Why do they ſeparate from us? Why do they aſſociate and combine together into diſtinct Congregations, as being purer, more ſelect Chriſtians than others? Now, tho' ſuch Perſons as theſe may be in truth very *weak*, of little Judgment or Goodneſs, notwithſtanding this Conceit of themſelves and their Party; yet theſe are not by any means to plead for Indulgence under that Character, nor to expect we ſhou'd forego our Liberty, to pleaſe and humour them.

3. Thoſe who are really *weak*, that is, ignorant and injudicious, are to be born withal only for a time, till they have receiv'd better inſtruction: but we cannot be alwaies *Babes in Chriſt*, without our own groſs fault and neglect. Such as will not yield to the cleareſt reaſon, if it be againſt their Intereſt or their Party, can upon no account claim the privileges of Weak Perſons. Of theſe our Saviour had no regard, who were ſo unreaſonable and obſtinate in their oppoſition, *Matth.* 15. 14.

Not that I wou'd be ſo uncharitable as to condemn all, or the generality of *Diſſenters* for being Malicious and wilful in their diſſent from us: but however, 1. I beg them to examine, whether they have ſincerely endeavour'd to ſatisfy themſelves, and have devoutly pray'd to God to free their minds from prejudices and corrupt affections; for otherwiſe their *Weakneſs* is no more to be pity'd, than that Man's ſickneſs, who will not, tho' he may be cur'd. 2. I muſt ſay, that old and inveterate Miſtakes, that have been a 1000 times anſwer'd and proteſted againſt, are not much to be heeded by us. If People will by no means be prevail'd upon to lay aſide their fancies, they do not deſerve that compaſſion, which St. *Paul* preſcribes towards *Weak Brethren*. In matters of a doubtful or ſuſpicious nature, that are capable of being miſunderſtood and abus'd, yet if there be no Moral evil in them, and the doing of them is of ſome conſiderable conſequence to me; I am bound to forbear them no longer, than till I have endeavour'd to inform them rightly concerning the innocency of my action and intention, and given them notice of the evil, that might poſſibly happen to them. If I dig a pit or lay a block

block in the way, whereby others not knowing any thing of it, are hurt and wounded; I am guilty of cauſing them to fall: but if they are plainly and often told of it, and yet will run into the danger; they are then only to thank themſelves. Now, if it be thus in Caſes that are liable to ſuſpicion and miſinterpretation; it holds much more in the Orders of our Church, where the Offence ariſes not ſo much from the Nature of the Injunctions, as from Mens groſs ignorance, miſ-conceit, or perverſeneſs. This ſhall ſuffice to ſhew, what is the true Notion of a *Weak Brother.*

II. I am now to ſhew, *what it is to offend ſuch an one.* People are generally miſtaken about the ſenſe of *offending* or *giving offence.* For by it they commonly underſtand diſpleaſing or grieving another, and making him angry with them; and ſo they think themſelves bound in Conſcience to forbear all thoſe things, which *Godly* Perſons do not like or approve of, or are contrary to their Fancy or Judgment. 'Tis true, there is one place, that ſeems to favour this conceit; *Rom.* 14. 15. *If thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkeſt thou not charitably.* But it muſt be obſerv'd, that by *grieving* our Brother, is not meant diſpleaſing, but wounding and hurting him: and ſo it is us'd to denote that which cauſeth grief or ſorrow; and is the ſame with *deſtroying*, and *putting a ſtumbling-block or an occaſion to fall*, v. 15, 21. To be *offended* or *griev'd* is not to be troubl'd at what another has done out of pity and concern for his Soul: but to receive hurt our ſelves from it, being drawn or deceiv'd into ſome ſin by it.

But becauſe many well-diſpos'd People do think, that they muſt not do any thing, which good

Men are diſpleas'd or griev'd at, I deſire them to conſider a few things. 1. That to cenſure and condemn, and be diſpleas'd with the actions of thoſe that differ from them, or refuſe to join any longer with them in their ſeparate Congregations, is a great inſtance of peeviſhneſs and uncharitableneſs; and is that very ſin which St. *Paul* often warns his Weak Believers againſt, *viz.* that they ſhou'd not raſhly judge thoſe, who underſtood their Chriſtian Liberty better than themſelves. At this rate any company of Men, that ſhall reſolve to quarrel with all that do not do as they do, muſt oblige all to remain forever with them, for fear of giving them *offence*. If what I do, is not evil in it ſelf; it cannot become ſuch, becauſe another Man is cauſleſly angry with me for doing of it. 2. They that pretend, that this fear of *offending*, that is, diſpleaſing their *Weak Brethren*, hinders their complyance with the Church, ought ſeriouſly to examine themſelves, whether it is not really only the care of their credit and reputation with that Party, or elſe the ſecuring of ſome worldly intereſt, that keeps them from Conformity. 3. If to diſpleaſe our *Weak Brethren* were the ſinful *offending* him condemn'd by St. *Paul*; it wou'd prove an intolerable yoke upon Mens Conſciences, and beget ſuch endleſs perplexities, that we ſhou'd not be able to do any thing, tho' never ſo indifferent, with a well-aſſur'd mind; ſince one or other will in this ſenſe be *ſcandaliz'd* at it. We ſhall anger ſome by doing, others by forbearing: and ſince thoſe, who call themſelves *weak*, are divided into ſeveral factions, each condemning all the other; 'tis impoſſible for us to comply with any one of them, but we ſhall thereby diſpleaſe all the reſt. 4. If

we

we do nothing which may diſpleaſe our *Weak* Brethren; we do ſubmit our Judgments and Conſciences to the conduct of the moſt ignorant and injudicious Chriſtians: and yield them that authority over us, which we deny to our lawful Superiours. And 'tis ſtrange, that thoſe who think their Chriſtian Liberty ſo much violated by the determinations of their Superiours about indifferent matters, ſhou'd yet ſuffer themſelves to be thus ty'd up by the paſſions of their *Weak Brethren.* Whatever condeſcenſion may be due to the *Weak*, yet 'twas never intended they ſhou'd Govern the Wiſer: and who can Govern more abſolutely than thoſe, whom none muſt diſpleaſe?

Since then *Scandalizing* or *giving offence* do's not ſignify doing ſomething which another takes ill, I deſign to ſhew what is the true meaning of it in *Scripture.* The *Greek* word which we tranſlate *Scandal* or *Offence*, ſignifies either a Trap or Snare, or elſe more commonly ſomething laid in the way of another, which occaſions his ſtumbling or falling, by which he is bruis'd and hurt. And ſo, whatever it was that hindred Men from becoming Chriſt's Diſciples, or made them entertain unworthy thoughts of their profeſſion, or diſcourag'd them in it, or tempted them to forſake it, is call'd a *Scandal* or *Offence.* It is ſometimes rendred an *occaſion to fall*, Rom. 14. 13. *occaſion of ſtumbling*, 1 Joh. 2. 10. *a ſtumbling block*, Rev. 2. 14. or *a thing that doth offend*, Matth. 13. 41. in all which places there is the ſame original word. Hence to *Offend* or *Scandalize* any one, as 'tis commonly us'd in the (*a*) *New Teſtament*, is to

(*a*) See *Matth.* 17. 27. and 26. 31. *Mark* 4. 17. and 6. 3. *Joh.* 6. 61. 1. *Cor.* 1. 23.

do

do ſomething which tends to fright him from Chriſtianity, to make him think hardly of it, or is apt to make him Repent] of his Converſion. So that in the moſt general ſenſe, to *Scandalize* or *Offend* any one, is to give occaſion to his ſin, and conſequently his Ruin and undoing; and this I ſuppoſe will be granted by all, that do not receive their opinions from the mere ſound of words. Hence I obſerve *Four* things.

1. The better Men are, the harder 'tis to *Scandalize* them. Thoſe are not ſuch *Godly* Perſons, as they wou'd be thought, who are ſo ready at all turns to be Offended. For how can they excel others in knowledge or goodneſs, who are ſo eaſily drawn or tempted to ſin?

2. That Man, that ſaies, he ſhall be *Scandaliz'd* at what another Man do's, ſpeaks falſely. For it is as much as to ſay, that he ſhall be led into ſin *ignorantly*: whereas his ſaying ſo confutes his ignorance; for if he knows it to be a ſin, he commits it wilfully.

3. Since *Offending* or *ſcandalizing* ſignifies tempting to ſin, there can be no fear of *Offending* any one by Conforming to the Church; becauſe there is nothing us'd in it, but what may be comply'd with without ſin. For the Man that fears *giving Offence to the Weak*, is ſuppos'd to be ſatisfy'd himſelf, that Conformity is lawful: and how then ſhou'd he fear that his example will tempt others to ſin in doing an innocent action? If it be ſaid, that tho' what I do is lawful, yet it may give occaſion to others to do ſomething elſe that is unlawful, and ſo I may become truly guilty of *giving Offence*; I anſwer, that we are accountable only for the Natural tendencies of our actions, and not for ſuch conſequences, as wicked or ſilly Men

may

may draw from them; for at that rate a Man cou'd not ſpeak or do any thing without the guilt of *giving Scandal.* If it be ſaid, that tho' I am ſatisfy'd my ſelf, yet I may by my example tempt others that are not ſatisfy'd, or that think Conformity to be ſinful, to follow me with a doubting or gainſaying Conſcience; I anſwer, 1. that 'tis as unlawful to go to ſeparate Meetings againſt one's Conſcience, as to Conform againſt one's Conſcience: and the Man ought to fear, leſt he draw ſome to ſeparate Meetings againſt their Conſcience; as well as he fears the drawing of others to Church againſt their Conſcience. The influence of his example is the ſame in both inſtances, and the danger of Scandal is equal; and therefore his own perſuaſion muſt determine his practice. 2. A Man that is ſatisfy'd himſelf, ought to endeavour to ſatisfy others, eſpecially thoſe whom he formerly perſuaded to ſeparation by his example; and when he has done thus, he has done what lies in his power to prevent the ill effect, and ſhall not be farther anſwerable for the conſequences of what he doth.

4. Since *Scandalizing* is leading into ſin, we may *Scandalize* others as ſoon by complying with them, as by thwarting their humour. St. *Paul*, who circumcis'd *Timothy*, *Acts* 16. 3. in favour of the *Weak Jews*, leſt they ſhou'd have forſaken the Faith; refus'd to circumciſe *Titus*, *Gal.* 2. 3. (tho' he angred the *Jews* by it) leſt they ſhou'd think the *Jewiſh* Law ſtill in force. And this he did, becauſe the condition of the Perſons was different. If he had pleas'd them, he had truly *Scandaliz'd* them, by hardening them in their folly and ignorance. Mr. *Baxter* ſaies (in his *Cure of Church-Diviſions*) *Many a time I have the rather*

gone

gone to the Common-Prayers of the public Aſſemblies, for fear of being a Scandal to thoſe ſame men, that call'd the going to them a Scandal; that is, for fear of hardening them in a ſinful Separation and Error. Becauſe I knew, that was not Scandal which they call'd Scandal; that is, diſpleaſing them, and croſſing their Opinions; but hardening them in an Error or other Sin, is true Scandalizing. Underſtand this, or you will diſpleaſe God under pretence of avoiding Scandal, p. 135. This ſurely ought to be well conſider'd of by a ſort of Men amongſt us, who ſhall go to Church in the Morning, and to a Conventicle in the Afternoon; who halt between both, and wou'd fain diſpleaſe neither ſide, but indeed give real Offence to both. From all this, I think, it is very plain, that he, who is ſatisfy'd in his own mind of the lawfulneſs of Conformity, but is afraid of giving Offence by it, if he be true to his Principle, ought to haſten the faſter to his Pariſh-Church, that he may not offend thoſe very *Diſſenters*, of whom he wou'd ſeem to be ſo tender.

III. In the laſt place I am to inquire how far, and in what inſtances we are bound to conſider the Weakneſs of our Brethren. In anſwer to this I ſhall now ſuppoſe, notwithſtanding all I have already ſaid, that the *Diſſenters* are *truly weak* Perſons, and that there may be ſome danger of their being, thro' their own fault, *Offended* by our Conformity; yet taking this for granted, I ſhall plainly ſhew, that he who is in his own mind convinced of the lawfulneſs of Conformity, ought not to forbear it for fear of giving ſuch *Offence* to his Weak Brethren. For,

Firſt, Nothing that is ſinful may be done to avoid others being *Scandaliz'd*. *We muſt not do evil, that*

that good may come, Rom. 3. 8. We muſt not commit the leaſt ſin our ſelves, to prevent the greateſt ſin in another. The very beſt things may be perverted, and Chriſt himſelf is ſaid *to be ſet for the fall of many*, Luke 2. 24. but this do's not cancel our obligations to obey God's Laws. If *offence* be taken at my doing any duty, thoſe only that are *offended* are chargeable with it. Since thoſe who fear *giving Offence*, do themſelves think Conformity lawful; and ſince Conformity is injoin'd; and ſince nothing is more plain from *Scripture*, than that we muſt obey our Superiours in all lawful things; therefore 'tis evident that we muſt not omit the duty of Conforming for fear of *giving Offence*.

But 'tis Objected, that thoſe Precepts which contain only rituals, are to give place to thoſe which concern the welfare of Mens Bodies, and much more to thoſe which concern the welfare of their Souls: ſo that when both together cannot be obſerv'd, we muſt break the former to obſerve the latter. *God will have mercy, and not ſacrifice*. Now if ſacrifices preſcrib'd by God himſelf, muſt give place to Acts of Mercy, much more muſt *Human Inventions* yeild to them. To this I anſwer, that the commands of our Superiours do not bind us either in a caſe of abſolute neceſſity, or when they plainly hinder any moral duty to God or our Neighbour: but this is only when the neceſſity is urgent and extreme, and the ſin we muſt otherwiſe commit, evident and certain; and at laſt our obedience is diſpenſed withal only for that one time. We may be abſent from Church to ſave the life of our Neighbour, or to quench the firing of his houſe: but 'twou'd be a pitiful pretence for the conſtant neglect of our public

public Prayers, becauſe in the mean time our Neighbours houſe may be fired, or his life invaded, and ſo he may ſtand in need of our help. Tho' this argument may ſerve to excuſe the omiſſion of ſomething commanded by lawful Authority, in extraordinary caſes which very rarely happen: yet to be ſure it will not help thoſe, who live in open diſobedience to the Laws, only becauſe they are loth to offend thoſe who are not ſatisfy'd with what is appointed.

But, ſay they, Scandal is Spiritual Murther: and if we muſt obey Authority, tho' Scandal follow; then, when Authority commands, we may murther the Soul of our Brother, and deſtroy him by our meats, for whom Chriſt dy'd. But I anſwer, that wearing a Surplice, Kneeling at the Sacrament, *&c.* will not make Men forſake Chriſtianity; which I have prov'd, is the only proper *Scandalizing* our Brother, which St. *Paul* charges with the guilt of *Soul-murther*. Nay, this argument concludes as ſtrongly againſt obedience to any other command of God, if a Brother be offended at it; as it do's againſt ſubmiſſion to Superiours in things lawful. For 'tis not only the Law of Man, but the Law of God alſo, that is broken by diſobedience to Superiours. We cannot be bound to tranſgreſs a plain Law of God for fear of ſome evil, that may chance to happen to ſome others thro' their own fault: becauſe every one is bound to have a greater care of his own, than of others Salvation; and conſequently to avoid ſin in himſelf, than to prevent it in his Brethren. Nay, as Biſhop *Sanderſon* ſaies, *To allow Men, under pretence that ſome offence may be taken thereat, to diſobey Laws and Conſtitutions made by thoſe that are in Authority over us, is the next way to cut the Sinews*

Sinews of all Authority, and to bring both Magiſtrates and Laws into contempt; for what Law ever was made, or can be made ſo juſt and reaſonable, but ſome Men or other either did, or might take offence thereat?

If it be here asked, whether any Human Authority can make that action ceaſe to be Scandalous, which if done without any ſuch command, had been Scandalous; I anſwer, that no Authority can ſecure that others ſhall not be offended by what I do out of obedience to it: but then it frees me from blame, by making that my duty, which if I had otherwiſe done, might have been uncharitable.

If it be ſaid, that avoiding of Scandal is a main duty of charity; and that, if Superiours may appoint, how far I ſhall ſhew my charity towards my Brother's Soul, then an earthly Court may croſs the determinations of the Court of heaven; I anſwer, that here is no croſſing the Determinations of God, ſince it is his expreſs Will, that in all lawful things we ſhou'd obey our Governours; and he who has made this our Duty, will not lay to our charge the Miſchiefs, that may ſometimes without our fault, thro' the folly and peeviſhneſs of Men, follow from it. And certainly it is as equal and reaſonable, that our Superiours ſhou'd appoint how far we ſhall exerciſe our Charity towards our Brethren; as it is, that the miſtake and prejudice of any private Chriſtians ſhou'd ſet Bounds to their Power and Authority; or that every ignorant and froward Brother ſhou'd determine, how far we ſhall be obedient to thoſe whom God has ſet over us. But farther, duties of juſtice are of ſtricter obligation than duties of Charity. Now obedience to Superiours is a debt;

and we injure them, if we do not pay it: but avoiding Scandal is a duty of charity; which indeed we are obliged to, as far as we can, but not till we have given to every one his due. *It is therefore*, ſaies Biſhop *Sanderſon*, *no more lawful for me to diſobey the lawful command of a Superiour, to prevent thereby the Offence of one or a few Brethren; than it is lawful for me to do one Man wrong, to do another Man a courteſy withal; or than it is lawful for me to rob the Exchequer to Relieve an Hoſpital.*

If it be reply'd, that tho' the care of not giving Offence be in reſpect of our Brother but a debt of Charity, yet in regard of God it is a legal debt, ſince he may, and do's require it as due, and we do him wrong if we diſobey him; I grant indeed, that we are requir'd both to be obedient to Superiours, and to be Charitable to our Brother: but then I ſay, this is not the Charity which God requires, when I give what is none of my own. A ſervant muſt be Charitable to the Poor according to his ability: but he muſt not rob his Maſter to Relieve them. Our Superiours only muſt conſider the danger of Scandal: but we muſt conſider the duty we owe them; this being a matter wherein we cannot ſhew our charity without violating the right of our Superiours.

Thus then it is plain, that they are things merely *indifferent*, not only in their own nature, but alſo in reſpect to us, in the uſe of which we are obliged to conſider the *Weakneſs* of our Brethren. What is our duty, muſt be done, tho' *Scandal* follow it: but in matters, wherein our practice is not determin'd by any command, we ought ſo to exerciſe our Liberty, as to avoid (if poſſible) giving any *Offence*. 'Tis an undoubted part of Chriſtian Charity, to endeavour by admonition,

nition, inſtruction, good example, and by the forbearance of things lawful, at which we foreſee our Neighbour out of weakneſs will be apt to be *Scandaliz'd*, to prevent his falling into any ſin or miſchief. After this manner do we profeſs our ſelves ready to do or forbear any thing in our own power, to gain *Diſſenters* to the Church: but we muſt not omit our duty for it.

I ſhall only add, that this very Rule of yielding to our Brother in things indifferent, ought to have ſome reſtrictions; but I think there are no unalterable Rules to be laid down in this affair. For it being an exerciſe of Charity, muſt be determin'd by the meaſure of Prudence according to Circumſtances: and we may as well go about to give certain Rules for Men's Charity in other Caſes, and fix the proportion which every Man ought to give of his Eſtate towards the Relief of the Poor; as poſitively to tell how far a Man muſt deny himſelf in the uſe of indifferent things, and forego his own Liberty for the ſake of his Brother. *This whole matter* (ſaies Dr. *Hammond*, diſc. of *Scand.*) *is to be referr'd to the Chriſtian's Pious Diſcretion or Prudence; it being free to him either to abſtain, or not to abſtain, from any indifferent action* (*remaining ſuch*) *according as that Piety and that Prudence ſhall repreſent it to be moſt Charitable and Beneficial to other Mens Souls.*

Secondly, To avoid a leſs *Scandal* being taken by a few, we muſt not give a greater *Offence*, and of vaſtly more pernicious conſequence, to a much bigger number of Perſons. And if this matter were rightly conſider'd; we ſhou'd ſoon find our ſelves much more obliged, upon this account of Scandal, to join with our Church, than to ſe-

parate from it. For, 1. Our ſeparation hardens other *Diſſenters* in their perſuaſion of the unlawfulneſs of Conformity. For they will think we ſeparate upon the ſame reaſon with themſelves; and this is true *Scandalizing* them, or Confirming them in an evil cauſe. 2. Whatever Sect we join with, we *Offend* all the other Parties; who ſometimes ſpeak as hardly of one another, as of the Conformiſts. 3. Hereby great *Offence* is given to the Conformiſts. For this ſeparation is a public condemning of the Church, and is apt to breed Scruples, diſtaſt and prejudices, in the well-meaning, but leaſt-knowing Members of it. 4. *Scandal* is thereby given to Superiours, by bringing their Laws and Authority into contempt. And if it be ſo ſinful to Offend a little one; what ſhall we think of Offending a Prince, a Parliament, *&c!* No *Scandal* taken at an indifferent thing can be ſo great, as both the ſin and Scandal of confuſion, and contempt of Authority. 5. Hereby *Scandal* is given to the *Papiſts*, who are harden'd in their own way, becauſe they only have Peace and Unity; and this is a mighty temptation to many wavering Chriſtians to turn *Papiſts*. The *Papiſts* alwaies hit us in the Teeth with our Diviſions: whereas by our hearty Uniting with the *Church* of *England*, we may certainly wreſt this Weapon out of their hands. 6. Separation is a *Scandal* to Religion in general. It prejudices Men againſt it as an uncertain thing, and matter of endleſs diſpute; when they ſee what dangerous Quarrels commence from our Religious differences: and all the diſorders they have caus'd, ſhall by *ſome* be charged upon Chriſtianity it ſelf. Thus our cauſeleſs ſeparations open a wide door to Atheiſm, and all kind of Profaneſs and Irreligion.

The

The CONCLUSION,

Containing an earneſt Perſuaſive to Communion with the Eſtabliſh'd Church *of* England.

AND now, having ſhewn the Neceſſity of Maintaining conſtant Communion with the *Church* of *England*, and anſwer'd thoſe pleas, by which the *Diſſenters* endeavour to excuſe their Separation from her; nothing remains, but that I add an earneſt Perſuaſive to the practice of that, which I have prov'd to be a Chriſtian Duty. I beſeech you therefore with all the Earneſtneſs that becomes a Matter of ſo great Importance, and with all the Kindneſs and Tenderneſs that becomes a Chriſtian, to *ſuffer the Word of Exhortation*, & duly conſider what I offer to you.

I have ſhewn you in the *firſt* Chap. of this Diſcourſe, that *Nothing but ſinful Terms of Communion can juſtify a Separation*; and therefore you muſt charge our Church with ſinful terms of Communion, or elſe you cannot poſſibly defend your practice. Suppoſe that there were ſome things in our Conſtitution, that might be contriv'd better; yet every defect or ſuppos'd Corruption in a Church is not warrant enough to tear the Church in pieces. The queſtion is not, Whether there be any thing in our Conſtitution, which a Man cou'd wiſh to be alter'd: but whether any thing unlawful be appointed, which will make an alteration not only deſirable, but neceſſary; & Whether you are bound to withdraw, till ſuch Alteration be made. We ſeparate from the Church of *Rome*, becauſe She has corrupted the Main Principles of Religion, and requires her Members to join in theſe Cor-

ruptions: but this Charge cannot be faſten'd upon the Church of *England*, and therefore Separation from her muſt be unlawful.

Mr. *Calvin* (*a*) ſaies, that *Wherever the Word of God is duly preach'd, and reverently attended to, and the true uſe of the Sacraments kept up, there is the plain appearance of a true Church, whoſe Authority no Man may ſafely deſpiſe, or reject it's Admonitions, or reſiſt it's Counſels, or ſet at nought it's Diſcipline; much leſs ſeparate from it, and violate it's Unity. For that our Lord has ſo great regard to the Communion of his Church, that he accounts him an Apoſtate from his Religion, who obſtinately ſeparates from any Chriſtian Society, which keeps up the true Miniſtry of the Word and Sacraments; that ſuch a ſeparation is a denyal of God and Chriſt; and that it is a dangerous and pernicious Temptation, ſo much as to think of ſeparating from ſuch a Church, the Communion whereof is never to be rejected, ſo long as it continues in the true Uſe of the Word and Sacraments.* This is as plain and full a Determination of the Caſe, as if he had particularly deſign'd it againſt your own practice. Nay, the Miniſters of *New-England* tell you, that *To ſeparate from a Church for ſome Evil only conceiv'd, or indeed in the Church, which might and ſhou'd be tolerated, and heal'd with a Spirit of Meekneſs, and of which the Church is not yet convinced, tho' perhaps your ſelf be; for this or the like Reaſons to withdraw from public Communion in Word, Seals or Cenſures, is unlawful and ſinful.*

If you ſay, that the Governours may as well come down to you, by forbearing what you diſlike, as you come up to the law, by doing what it requires; I beſeech you to conſider, Whether our

(*a*) *Inſtitut.* lib. 4. ſect. 10, 11, 12.

Caſe

Caſe will bear this Wantonneſs, and Whether ſuch Expreſſions be conſiſtent with your Duty. I do not think it hard, I confeſs, to make out the prudence of their Determinations: but I think it hard, that a *Public Rule* ſhou'd not be thought Reaſon enough to juſtify things of this ſort, and to oblige the People to Complyance without more ado. Certainly there is no proſpect of Union, till Men learn Humility and Modeſty, and are contented to be Govern'd. What is the Duty of Superiours in our Caſe, I cannot determine: but ſure I am, that a Change (tho' in things perfectly indifferent) is no indifferent thing; and 'tis infinite odds, but if once they begin to change without neceſſity, there will never be an end of changing.

But farther, I deſire you to conſider, that the moſt eminent even of your own Writers, do flatly condemn your Separation from the Church of *England*. For they acknowledge her to be a true Church, and *(b)* hold, that *You are not to ſeparate farther from a true Church, than the things you ſeparate for, are unlawful, or conceiv'd ſo to be*; that is, they hold that you ought to go as far as you can, and do what you lawfully may, towards Communion with it. They *(c)* hold alſo, that *You are not to ſeparate from a Church for unlawful things, if the things accounted unlawful, are not of ſo heinous a Nature*

(b) See Burroughs's Iren. p. 184. *Vind. of Presb. Gov.* Brinſly's *Arraignm.* p. 16, 31. Corbet's *Plea for Lay-Com.* Newcomen's *Iren.* Epiſt. to the Read. *Ball's* Tryal, c. 7. *Jerubbaal.* p. 28, 30. Throughton's *Apol.* p. 107. Robinſon *of the Lawful. of Hear.* p. ult. *(c) See* Tombes's *Theod.* Anſwer to Pref. Sect. 23. *Blake's* Vind. *c.* 31. Brinſly's *Arraignm.* p. 50. Noyes's *Temple Meaſ.* p. 78. Owen's *Evangel. Love*, p. 76. *Cotton* on the 1 Epiſt. of John, p. 156. *Baxter's* Cure, dir. 5. *Vines* on the Sacram. p. 239. Corbet's *Acc. of Sep.* p. 103. Jerubbaal, p. 12.

as to unchurch a Church, or are not impos'd as neceſſary Terms of Communion. Nay they (*d*) produce ſeveral arguments to prove, that *Defects in Worſhip, if not eſſential, are no juſt reaſon for withdrawing from it.* 1. Becauſe to break of Communion for ſuch Defects, wou'd be to look after a greater Perfection, than this preſent ſtate will admit of. 2. Our Saviour and his Apoſtles did not ſeparate from defective Churches. 3. *Chriſt* doth ſtill hold Communion with defective Churches, and ſo ought we. 4. To ſeparate from ſuch defective Churches, wou'd deſtroy all Communion. Nor, 5. is it at all Warranted in ſcripture. Nor, 6. is it neceſſary, becauſe a Perſon may communicate in the Worſhip without partaking in thoſe Corruptions. Nay, 7. they urge that 'tis a duty to join with a defective Worſhip, where we can have no better.

(*d*) *See* Browniſts Confeſſ. *art.* 36. Jenkin *on Jude.* v. 19. *Allen's* Life. p. 3. Engl. Remembrancer, *Serm.* 4, 14, 16. Ball's *Tryal*, p. 74, *&c.* 132, *&c.* 159, *&c.* 308. Platform of Diſcipl. *c.* 14. *ſect.* 8. Hilderſham *on* John, *Lect.* 35, 82. Brian's *Dwell. with God*, p. 293, 294. *Bradſhaw's* Unreaſon. of Sep. p. 103, 104. *Non-Conf. no ſchiſmat.* p. 15. Cawdry's *Indep. a great ſchiſm*, p. 192, 195. Owen's *Evang. Love, c.* 3. Throughton's *Apol.* p. 100. *Vines* on the Sacram. p. 242. *Crofton's* Hard way to Heaven, p. 36. *Noyes's* Temp. Meaſ. p. 78, 89. *Davenport's* Reply, p. 281. *Cotton* on 1 Epiſt. of John. p. 156. *Calamy's* Godly Man's Ark, *Epiſt. Ded.* Allen's *Godly Man's Portion*, p. 122, 127. Bains *on* Epheſ. 2. 15. *Contin. Morn. Exer.* ſerm. 16. *Baxter's* Cure, *dir.* 35. Def. of his Cure, *part.* 1. *p.* 47. & *part.* 2. *p.* 171. Burroughs's *Iren. c.* 23. Morton's *Memorial*, p. 78. &c. *Blake's* Vind. c. 31. *Tombes's*, Theodul. *anſwer to Pref.* Sect. 25. *Conf. Savoy*, p. 12. 13. *Calamy's* Door of Truth open'd, p. 7. *Corbet's* N. C. Plea, *p.* 6. Robinſon's *Lawful. of Hear.* p. 19, 23. *Nye's* Caſe of great & preſ. Uſe, *p.* 10, 16, 18.

And

And as for our Injunctions in particular, they *(e)* own them to be tolerable, and what no Church is without, more or leſs; that they are not ſufficient to hinder Communion; and that they are but few. Nay farther, ſeveral of the old *Non-Conformiſts* zealouſly oppos'd Separation from the Church of *England*, and join'd with it to their dying Day, tho' they cou'd not *conform* as *Miniſters:* and ſeveral of the Modern *Non-Conformiſts* have written for Communion with it, and have in print *(f)* declar'd it to be their Duty and Practice.

But beſides the Sentiments of your own Teachers, there is greater Authority to be urged againſt you. For *in thoſe things, wherein you differ from us, you are condemn'd by the Practice of the Whole Catholic Church for fifteen hundred Years together*; and ſurely this Conſideration ought to prevail with Modeſt and Peaceable Men. This might afford a large field for Diſcourſe: but I ſhall only hint at a few Particulars.

1. We deſire you to produce an Inſtance of any ſetled Church, that was without *Epiſcopacy*, till *Calvin's* time. The greateſt Oppoſers of *Epiſcopacy* have been forced to grant, that it obtain'd in the Church within a few Years after the *Apoſtolic* age; and we are ſure we can carry it higher, even to the Apoſtles themſelves. There are but two Paſſages, and both of them not till the latter end of the fourth Century, that may ſeem to queſtion

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(e) See Lett. Min. of *Old-Engl.* p. 12, 13. *Bryan's* Dwell. with God, p. 311. *Troughton's* Apol. *c.* 7. *p.* 68. *Owen's* Peace-Off. *p.* 17. Miſch. of Impoſ. *Epiſt. Ded.* *(f) See Baxter's* Sacril. Deſert. *p.* 75. Mr. J. *Allen's* Life, *p.* 111. *Collins's* Doctr. of Schiſm. *p.* 64. *Lye's* Reaſ. Account, &c. *Hickman's* Bonaſ. Vap. *p.* 113. *Baxter's* Plea for Peace, *p.* 240.

Epiſcopal Authority. That of (*g*) St. *Jerom*, when improv'd to the utmoſt that it is capable of, only intimates *Epiſcopacy* not to be of *Apoſtolical* Inſtitution. And very clear it is to thoſe that are acquainted with St. *Jerom*'s Writings, that he often wrote in haſt, and did not always weigh things at the Beam, and forgot at one time what he had ſaid at another; that many Expreſſions fell from him in the heat of Diſputation, according to the warmth and eagerneſs of his Temper; and that he was particularly chafed into this Aſſertion by the fierce oppoſition of the *Deacons* at *Rome*, who began to Uſurp upon, and overtop the *Presbyters*; which tempted him to magnify and extol their Place and Dignity, as anciently equal to the *Epiſcopal* Office, and as containing in it the common Rights and Privileges of Prieſthood. For at other times, when he wrote with cooler thoughts about him, he does plainly and frequently enough aſſert the Authority of Biſhops over Preſbyters; and did himſelf conſtantly live in Communion with, and Subjection to Biſhops. The other paſſage is that of *Aerius*, who held indeed that a Biſhop and a Presbyter differ'd nothing in Order, Dignity, or Power. But he was led into this Error merely thro' Envy and Emulation, being vext to ſee that his Companion *Euſtathius* had gotten the Biſhoprick of *Sebaſtia*, which himſelf had aim'd at. This made him ſtart aſide, and talk extravagantly: but the Church immediately branded him for an *Heretic*, and drove him and his Followers out of all Churches, and from all Cities and Villages. And *Epiphanius*, who was his Cotemporary, repreſents him as very little better

(*g*) In Epiſt. ad *Tit.* cap. 1.

than

than a Mad-man. 2. We deſire you to name any Church, that did not conſtantly uſe *Forms of Prayer* in public Worſhip; but of this I have diſcours'd at large in the *third* Chapter. 3. Shew us any Church, that did not always obſerve *feſtivals* in Commemoration of *Chriſt* and his Saints. 4. Name any one Church ſince the Apoſtles times, that had not it's Rites and Ceremonies, as many (if not more) in Number, and as liable to Exception, as thoſe that we uſe. Nay, there are few things (if any at all) requir'd by us, which were not in uſe in the beſt Ages of Chriſtianity. Nay farther, I could eaſily (*h*) ſhew, that moſt (if not all) the Uſages of our Church, are either practis'd in foreign Churches, or at leaſt allow'd of by the moſt Eminent and Learned Divines of the Reformation.

Conſider alſo, that Separation is the ready way to bring in *Popery*, as Mr. *Baxter* (*i*) has prov'd. The Church of *England* is the great Bulwark againſt Popery, and therefore the *Papiſts* have us'd all poſſible Means to deſtroy it, and particularly by Diviſions. They have attempted to pull it down by pretended *Proteſtant* hands; and have made uſe of you to bring about their own deſigns. In order hereunto they have upon all Occaſions ſtrenuouſly promoted the Separation, and mixt themſelves with you; they have put on every Shape, that they might the better follow the Common Outcry againſt the Church as *Popiſh* and *Antichriſtian*; ſpurring you on to call for a more pure and ſpiritual Way of Worſhip, and to clamour for Liberty and Toleration; as foreſeeing,

(*h*) *See* Durel's *View of the Goverm.* &c. and *Sprint's* Caſſand. Anglic. *p.* 123, &c. (*i*) Defence, *p.* 27, 52.

that

that when they had ſubverted all Order, and beaten you out of all ſober Principles, you muſt be neceſſitated at laſt to center in the Communion of the *Romiſh* Church. This trade they began almoſt in the very infancy of the Reformation; as appears by the (*k*) ſtories of *Comin* and *Heath*: and no doubt they held on the ſame in ſucceeding Times; as appears (beſides all other Inſtances) by (*l*) *Bellarmi*'s Letter concerning the beſt Way of managing the *Popiſh* Intereſt in *England* upon the Reſtoration of King *Charles* the II. For therein it was advis'd to foment Fears and Jealouſies of the King and Biſhops; to aſperſe the Biſhops and Miniſters of the Church of *England*, and to repreſent it's Doctrine and Worſhip as coming too near the Church of *Rome*; to ſecond the factious in promoting an Indulgence, and to endeavour, that the Trade and Treaſure of the Nation might be engroſſ'd between themſelves and other diſcontented Parties.

We know how reſtleſs and induſtrious the *Romiſh* Faction has ever been; and the only viſible ſecurity we have againſt the prevailing of it, lies in the firm Union of *Proteſtants*. And therefore I conjure you by all the kindneſs, which you pretend for the *Proteſtant* Religion, heartily to join in Communion with us. For the Common Enemy waits all Opportunities, and ſtands ready to enter at thoſe breaches, which you are Making. You might condemn the Raſhneſs of your own Counſels, and lament it, it may be, when it wou'd be too late; if you ſhou'd ſee *Popery* erected upon the ruins of that Church, which you your ſelves

(*k*) Foxes and Firebrands. (*l*) See *Stillingfleet*'s Unreaſonableneſs of Separation, *Pref.* p. 20, &c.

had

had overthrown. It wou'd be a ſad addition to your Miſeries, if the Guilt and Shame of them too might be laid to your charge. With what remorſe wou'd you reflect upon it, (when the heat of your Paſſion was over) if the *Proteſtant* Profeſſion ſhou'd be farther endanger'd, and the Agents of *Rome* get greater advantages daily by thoſe Diſtractions, which have been ſecretly managed by them, but openly carried on and maintain'd by your ſelves? With what face wou'd you look, to ſee the *Papiſts*, not only triumphing over you, but mocking and deriding you, for being ſo far impos'd upon by their Cunning, as to be made the immediate inſtruments of your own Ruin? Therefore I beſeech you not to act, as if you were proſecuting the Deſigns of the *Conclave*; and proceed juſt as if you were govern'd by the Decrees of the pretended Infallible Chair. You may be aſham'd to look ſo much like Tools in the hands of the Jeſuits; when you ſuffer your ſelves to be guided by thoſe Meaſures which they had taken, and talk and do as they wou'd have you, as if you were immediately inſpir'd from *Rome*.

To theſe arguments I muſt add another, which I hope will prevail with you; *viz.* I cannot ſee, how you can avoid being ſelf-condemn'd, if you continue in your Separation. For certain it is, that moſt of you have been at our Churches, and receiv'd the Sacrament there; and I am not willing to think, that you acted againſt your Conſciences, or did it merely to ſecure a gainful Office, or a place of Truſt, or to eſcape the Laſh and Penalty of the Law. Theſe are Ends ſo very Vile and Sordid; this is ſo horrible a Proſtitution of the Holy Sacrament, the moſt venerable Myſtery

ſtery of our Religion; ſo deliberate a Way of ſinning, even in the moſt ſolemn act of Worſhip; that I can hardly ſuſpect any ſhou'd be guilty of it, but Men of Profligate and Atheiſtical Minds. But then, why do's not the ſame Principle, that brings you at one Time, bring you at another? Why can we never have your Company, but when Puniſhment or Advantage prompts you to it? We blame the *Papiſts* for diſpenſing with Oaths, and receiving the Sacrament to ſerve a turn, and to advance the Intereſt of their Cauſe: but God forbid, that ſo heavy a Charge ſhou'd ever lie at the Doors of *Proteſtants*; and eſpecially thoſe who wou'd be thought moſt to abhor *Popiſh* practices; and who wou'd take it ill to be accounted not to make as much, if not more, Conſcience of their Waies, than other Men.

Now I beſeech you to reaſon a little; If our Communion be ſinful, why did you enter into it? If it be lawful, why do you forſake it? Is it not that which the commands of Authority have ty'd upon you; which Commands you are bound to ſubmit to, *not only for Wrath, but alſo for Conſcience ſake?* Are not the Peace and Unity of the Church, things that ought greatly to ſway with all Sober, Humble and Conſidering Chriſtians? *If it be poſſible*, ſaies the Apoſtle, *and as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men.* And ſhall Peace be broken only in the Church, where it ought to be kept moſt intire? And that by thoſe who acknowledge it to be *poſſible*, and within their Power? Are you ſatisfy'd in your Conſcience to join in Communion with us; and will you not do it for the ſake of the Church of God? Will you refuſe to do what is lawful, and (as the Caſe ſtands)

ſtands) neceſſary in order to Peace; only becauſe Authority commands, and has made it your Duty? Let me intreat you, as you love your dear Redeemer, to do as much for the Peace of *His Church*, as for a Vote or Office; and to come to the Sacrament of his Body and Blood as *Chriſtians*, and not as *Politicians*.

Let theſe great truths ſink into your hearts; and conſider, I beſeech you, what you are doing. Be well adviſ'd, before you venture upon that, which makes you guilty of a ſin of the blackeſt Nature. Be not blinded by Prejudice or Paſſion, nor take Opinions upon truſt: but ſearch and examine into the truth. Conſciences truly tender are willing and deſirous to embrace all Opportunities of Reſolution; and are ready to kiſs the hand, that wou'd bring them better Information. They will not neglect, much leſs thruſt from them, the means that might eaſe them of their Doubts and Scruples. But it looks very odly, that ſo many of you are no more concern'd to underſtand the true State of the Church of *England*, and the Nature and Reaſons of her Conſtitutions; that ſo few of you care to conſer with thoſe that are able to inſtruct you: but cry out, You are ſatisfy'd already; nay, ſome of you, to my knowledge, when deſir'd to propoſe your Scruples, in order to the Giving you Satisfaction, have plainly and abſolutely refus'd to do it. There is little reaſon to believe, that ſuch Perſons have ever read and examin'd, what the Church of *England* has to ſay for her ſelf. Are there not many, that not only Scruple, but rail at the Book of *Common-Prayer*, that yet never heard it, nor perhaps ever read it, in all their Lives? And if this be not to ſpeak evil of what they know not, I cannot tell what is.

You

You generally forbear our Public Worſhip, upon no other ground, but becauſe you prefer your own arbitrary way before it: whereas I may take the Confidence to affirm, that our *Liturgy* was made and revis'd with that Prudence and Moderation, that Care and Circumſpection, that there is nothing now extant in that kind, that has been compos'd with greater Wiſdom and Piety. If I ſhou'd compare it with the Performances in the other way; (not to mention the many indecent, incoherent, irreverent Expreſſions, to ſay no worſe, that might be collected) let any *Extempore* Prayer, made by the ableſt of thoſe, that magnify that way and deſpiſe ours, be taken in writing and publiſh'd to the World; and I am confident, that one Man, without any great pains, may find more things really exceptionable in that ſingle Prayer, in a ſhort time; than the ſeveral Parties of *Diſſenters*, with all the Diligence they have hitherto us'd, have been able to diſcover in the whole Service of our Church, in more than an hundred Years. And yet ſome of you, that ſeek induſtriouſly for Scruples in the *Common-Prayer*, will readily join in *Extempore* Prayers without any Scruple. This is ſuch Partiality and unequal Dealing, as cannot eaſily be excus'd.

'Tis true, the early Prepoſſeſſion of a contrary Opinion, the powerful Prejudices of Education, an implicit and unexamin'd belief of what their Guides and Leaders teach them, have a ſtrange force upon the minds of Men; ſo that in effect they no more doubt of the truth and goodneſs of the Cauſe they are engaged in, than they queſtion the Articles of their Creed. Theſe and the like are very dangerous and uſual Miſtakes, that do frequently proceed from the Prevalency of our Paſſions.

Paſſions. Now the firſt ſtep towards Concord in Opinion and Affections, is to diſpoſe your Minds to a calm and teachable Temper; to be alwaies ready to acknowledge the force of an Argument, tho' it contradict your perſuaſions never ſo much. Wherefore I do once and again intreat you, that laying aſide all Pride, Partiality and Self-conceit, you wou'd not *think more highly of your ſelves*, and of your own way, *than you ought to think*. Truth makes the eaſieſt entrance into Modeſt and Humble Minds. *The Meek will he guide in judgment, the Meek will he teach his Way.* The Spirit of God never reſts upon the proud Man.

But eſpecially you muſt be very careful, that *Secular Intereſt* did not either engage you in the Separation at the beginning, or provoke you to continue in it. And there is the more reaſon to put you upon this Inquiry, not only becauſe *Secular* Ends are very apt to mix with, and ſhelter themſelves under the ſhadow of, Religion; but becauſe this has been an old Artifice, made uſe of to promote Separation. Thus the *Donatiſts* upheld their Separation, and kept their Party faſt together, by trading only within themſelves, and imploying none but thoſe that wou'd be of their ſide; nay and ſometimes hiring Perſons to be Baptiz'd into their Party, as *Criſpin* did the People of *Mappalia*. And how evident the ſame Policy is among our modern *Quakers*, is too notorious to need either Proof or Obſervation. Whoever looks into the Nation, muſt needs take notice how Intereſts are form'd, and by what methods Parties and Factions are kept up; how many thouſands of the poorer ſort of you depend upon this or that Man for your Work and Livelyhood; how many of you depend upon others for your Trade,

whom accordingly thoſe Men can readily Command, and do produce to give Votes and increaſe Parties on all public Occaſions; and what little encouragement any Man finds from you, that deſerts you, and comes over to the Church of *England*. Let me beſeech you therefore impartially to examine your ſelves; and to ſearch, whether a worldly ſpirit be not at the bottom of your Zeal and Stiffneſs. Theſe, I confeſs, are Deſigns too baſe and ſordid to be own'd above-board: but *Be not deceiv'd, God is not mock'd*; *Man looks to the outward Appearance, but God looks to the Heart.* If you hope to gain and grow rich by your Separation; if you are aſham'd or ſcorn to retract your Opinions; if you imagine you have more *Light* than the firſt Reformers, when indeed you are very ignorant; if you cannot endure to be oppos'd in any thing; if you murmur and repine at your Governours, when they require your Obedience, where you are unwilling to pay it; theſe are Signs, that your affections are turbulent and unruly: and while you are thus diſpos'd, you can never be aſſur'd, but that Coveteouſneſs, Pride, and Impatience, might be the greateſt Motives, that induced you to make a Separation, and the ſtrongeſt Arguments that you have to maintain it.

But above all things, I beſeech you for the ſake of your precious Souls, to *conſider the Heinous Nature and Guilt of Schiſm*; which is nothing elſe but the ſeparating your ſelves from a true Church, without any juſt occaſion given. I doubt, you are not ſufficiently ſenſible, how much you oppoſe that Spirit of Peace and Brotherly Love, which ſhou'd diffuſe it ſelf thro' the whole Body of Chriſtian People; when you ſuppoſe every ſlender

ſlender Pretence enough to juſtify your departing from us, and ſetting up a Church againſt a Church. The Old *Non-Conformiſts* charg'd the People to be as tender of Church-Diviſion, as they were of Drunkenneſs, Whoredom, or any other enormous Crimes; whereas you ſeem to think it a matter almoſt indifferent, and that you are left to your own choice to join with what Society of Chriſtians you pleaſe. Which giddy principle, if it ſhou'd prevail, wou'd certainly throw us into an abſolute Confuſion; and introduce all the Errours and Miſchiefs, that can be imagin'd. But our Bleſſed Lord founded but one Univerſal Church; and when he was ready to be Crucify'd for us, and pray'd not for the Apoſtles alone, but *for them alſo that ſhou'd believe in him thro' their Word*; one of the laſt Petitions which he then put up, amongſt diverſe others to the ſame Purpoſe, was *That they all may be One, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they alſo may be one in us, that the World may believe that thou haſt ſent me.* 'Tis plain this was to be a Viſible *Unity*, that might be taken notice of in the World, and ſo become an Inducement to move Men to embrace the Chriſtian Faith. Peace and Amity, and a good Correſpondence betwixt the ſeveral Members of which they conſiſt, is the only Beauty, Strength and Security of all Societies; and on the contrary, the nouriſhing of Animoſities, and running into oppoſite Parties and Factions, do's mightily weaken, and by degrees almoſt unavoidably draw on the Ruin and Diſſolution of any Community, whether Civil or Sacred. Concord and Union therefore will be as neceſſary for the Preſervation of the Church, as of the State. It has been known by too ſad an Experience, as

well in ours, as other Ages, what a pernicious Influence the Inteſtine Broils and Quarrels among Chriſtians have had. They have been the great ſtumbling-block to *Jews*, *Turks*, and *Heathens*, and the main hindrance of their Converſion; they have made ſome among our ſelves to become Doubtful and Sceptical in their Religion; they have led others into many dangerous Errors, that ſhake the very Foundations of our Faith; and ſome they have tempted to caſt off the Natural ſenſe they had of the Deity, and embolden'd them to a profeſs'd Atheiſm. Therefore as you wou'd avoid the hardening of Men in Atheiſm and Infidelity, and making the Prayer of our dying Saviour (as much as in you lies) wholly ineffectual; you ought to be exceeding cautious, that you do not wilfully *Divide* his Holy Catholic Church.

You are often warn'd of this; and how many Arguments do's St. *Paul* heap together to perſuade you to keep the *Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*? *One Body and one Spirit, even as you are call'd in one Hope of your Calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm, one God and Father of all*; Eph. 4. 3, 4, 5, 6. And how pathetically do's the ſame Apoſtle exhort you again to the ſame thing, by all the mutual Endearments that Chriſtianity affords? *If there be therefore any Conſolation in Chriſt, if any Comfort in Love, if any Fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies; fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like minded, having the ſame Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind*; Phil. 2. 1, 2. Theſe vehement Exhortations to *Peace* and Concord, do ſtrictly oblige you to hold Communion with that Church, which requires nothing but what is lawful of you. They that have the ſame Articles of Faith, and hope

hope to meet in the ſame Heaven, thro' the Merits of the ſame Lord; ſhou'd not be afraid to come into the ſame Aſſemblies, and join ſeriouſly in ſending up the ſame Prayers, and participating of the ſame Sacraments. Beſides the many ſtrict Precepts and other ſtrong Obligations which you have to this Duty, our Saviour dy'd, *that he might gather together in* One, *the Children of God that were ſcatter'd abroad*; John 11. 52. And do you not then contradict this end of his Death, in ſetting thoſe at Variance, whom he intended to *Unite?* Nay, may you not be ſaid to *Crucify the Son of God afreſh*, by mangling and dividing a ſound and healthful part of that Body, of which he owns himſelf to be the Head? If indeed our Church did require you to profeſs any falſe Doctrine, or to do any thing contrary to any Divine Command; you were bound in ſuch inſtances to withdraw from her: but ſince her Doctrine, Diſcipline and Worſhip are good and lawful; you are indiſpenſably engaged to join in Communion with her. For, as I ſaid before, and it cannot be inculcated too often, *Nothing but the Unlawfulneſs of joining with us can make a* Separation *Lawful.*

Let it pity you at leaſt to ſee the ghaſtly wounds, that are ſtill renew'd by the continuance of our Diviſions. Be perſuaded to have ſome Compaſſion on a Bleeding Church, that is ready to faint, and in imminent Danger of being made a prey to her Enemies, by the unnatural Heats and Animoſities of thoſe, that ſhou'd Support and Defend her. Why ſhou'd you leave her thus Deſolate and Forlorn, when her preſent Exigencies require your moſt Cordial Aſſiſtance? If the condition of her Communion were ſuch as God's

Laws did not allow; you might forſake her that had forſaken him: but ſince this cannot be Objected againſt her; ſince ſhe exacts no *forbidden* thing of you, you ought to ſtrengthen her Hands by an unanimous Agreement. Since the Subſtantials of Religion are the ſame, let not the Circumſtances of external Order and Diſcipline be any longer an Occaſion of Difference amongſt us. And ſo ſhall we bring Glory to God, a happy Peace to a Divided Church, a conſiderable Security to the *Proteſtant* Religion; and probably defeat the ſubtil Practices of *Rome*, which now ſtands gaping after All, and hopes by our Diſtractions to repair the Loſſes ſhe has ſuffer'd by the Reformation.

May the Wiſdom of Heaven make all wicked Purpoſes unſucceſful; and the Bleſſed Spirit of Love heal all our Breaches, and proſper the charitable Endeavours of thoſe that follow after PEACE. *Amen.*

THE END.